



The Hunters and The Hunted.

Exploring Practitioner and Public Attitudes Towards Paedophile Hunting Groups and the Implications for Risk Management.

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

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Professional Doctorate

of

Criminal Justice Studies

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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Portsmouth, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award

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List of Abbreviations

CATSO: Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders Scale

CJS: Criminal Justice System

CSODS: Child Sexual Offender Disclosure Scheme

MAPPa: Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

NPCC: National Police Chief's Council

NPS: National Probation Service

NOMS: National Offender Management Service

OASys: Offender Assessment System

OCAG: Online Child Abuse Activist Groups

OM: Offender Manager

PH: Paedophile Hunter

RM2000: Risk Matrix 2000

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SWSC: South West South Central

ViSOR: Violent and Sex Offenders' Register

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Abstract

Public fascination with those convicted of sexual offences against children and the appetite for naming and shaming these individuals is not a new phenomenon. The rise in popularity of the internet and the surge in content available online is more recent, and so is the problem of threat exceeding capacity. This research therefore set out to critically analyse practitioner and public perceptions towards paedophile hunting activity. Considering both the attitudes of those who have experience in managing the risk of convicted sexual offenders in the community, and synthesising these with the attitudes and opinions of members of the public. To achieve this, the research has utilised a mixed methods design. It included 28 in-depth, qualitative interviews with police and probation practitioners who have experience of overseeing risk management of convicted sexual offenders in the community. In addition to a large-scale online survey, yielding 426 responses, utilised to understand public perceptions of both sexual offenders and paedophile hunting groups.

The research was an exploratory examination using a mixed method approach which included an online survey to generate the quantitative data and in-depth qualitative interviews. As it is an exploratory, mixed-methods analysis of opinions relating to paedophile hunters, there was no overall hypotheses being tested. The aim was to develop new knowledge, to inform community attitudes, engagement, and to provide information for training and advice to police and probation practitioners. The research was interdisciplinary in that it involved the broad topic areas of risk management, public protection, internet-based or cyber-crime, quantitative methods and qualitative methods. NVivo was used to analyse the views and opinions expressed by practitioners in qualitative semi-structured interviews and attitudes and opinions of the public were analysed using SPSS. Data analysis followed a constant comparative method, which allows connections to be made with broader contextual issues. In this research, constant comparison was used to generate hypotheses based on information from both the qualitative

and quantitative data that were then tested using correlation analysis in SPSS. Linking the studies has allowed associations to be made to broader contextual issues and in this research, that has most notably included comparing practitioner and public opinions with the literature included within the theoretical framework of public notification.

The research findings indicate a noteworthy conflict in practitioner's attitudes regarding the moral and ethical validity of paedophile hunting activity. It also identifies that while the public feel police forces should be utilising the information or 'evidence' collected by paedophile hunters to convict sexual offenders in court, they do not overwhelmingly support the activity. This research highlights the significant complexities surrounding the issue of paedophile hunting activity and it has identified that there is a continuum. Along this continuum, some, non-violent, forms of paedophile hunting activity are supported and even encouraged. Whilst more violent or aggressive forms of paedophile hunting activity, those more closely associated with typical vigilantism, are not supported and are indeed discouraged. As a result, and despite the actions of paedophile hunters having an obvious impact on risk management of convicted sexual offenders in the community, practitioners and members of the public do not routinely condemn paedophile hunting activity. Indeed, the research concludes that there is neither vast support for paedophile hunting activity in its entirety, nor clarity about the unhelpfulness of the activity. In doing so, it makes four key recommendations relating to community engagement, training for practitioners and identifies areas for further research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A simple Google search of the word ‘Paedophile’ returns over 6,730,000 results in 0.39 seconds (Google, 2019). The top result is a promoted Google warning advising that ‘Child abuse imagery is illegal’ (Google, 2019). In its simplest sense, this outlines the enormity of our interest, curiosity and aversion to this type of behaviour. Sexual offences, but especially paedophilia, appear frequently in the political and popular imagination of crime (Campbell, 2016, p.350). They have done so intermittently since the original ‘Stranger Danger’ campaign was launched in 1981 (Action Against Abduction, 2019; Campbell, 2016, p.350). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, evidence continues to demonstrate that the criminal justice responses to those convicted of sexual offences against a child has become increasingly more punitive, evidenced not only by the growth of rigorous punishments, but also in the refraction of rights through various exclusions (Campbell, 2016, p.350; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238; Williams, 2015, p.28).

Public preoccupation with sexual offenders is not new, it has been at the forefront of social and political debate for many years. What is more recent, with the emergence and prevalence of access to information via online sources, is the developing phenomena of paedophile hunters or digital vigilantes. Trottier (2017, p.55) describes digital vigilantism as ‘being a process where citizens are collectively offended by other citizen activity, and coordinate retaliation on mobile devices and social platforms.’ Trottier goes on to explain that the vigilantism includes naming and shaming, where the target’s home address, work details and other sensitive information are published on a public site and followed by harassment. The visibility produced through digital vigilantism is unwanted, intense and enduring (Trottier, 2017, p.55). ‘Paedophile Hunter UK’, ‘TRAP’ and ‘Dark Justice’ are a few examples of groups of people

who dedicate a significant amount of time and energy, focusing on the identification and often entrapment of sexual offenders. Their objective, which has its basis firmly within grass roots naming and shaming, is not new. Their tactics, primarily the use of social media, which is as far reaching as a medium of communication can be, begins to add an edge to this online activity, which permeates a far greater audience than has been seen before.

The growth of the Internet as a revolutionary technology has been swift (Willoughby, 2019, p.127). It has radically altered the way individuals interact with each other and we must therefore recognise the challenges of defining, monitoring and policing such a rapidly evolving digital form (Willoughby, 2019, p.130). In 2012, Facebook announced that it had over one billion active accounts, equating to an estimated 38% of global internet users (Turner, 2016, p.314). The effect is to alter the notions of community, space, identity and the relationship between them (Miller, 2011, pp.184–204; Willoughby, 2019, p.130). As professions concerned with people's welfare and understanding the risks associated with different human relationships and behaviours, this has significant consequences for police and probation practice. As this research will explore, the relationship between risk and the internet is understood as the exposure to harm due to increased capacity to meet people, and to become involved in activities where the rules of engagement are imprecise, in unregulated and unprotected online communities (Turner, 2016, p.314; Willoughby, 2019, p.127).

Despite research on sexual offending (both online and offline) now having considerable lineage, it is clear that there is conflict between research and the public standpoint, particularly regarding recidivism, prediction and the efficacy of sexual offending treatment programmes (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996 p.428; McAlinden, 2016, pp.129-138). In the context of modern societies, risk carries with it its own dogmatic dialogues and the emphasis on safety is based

on definitions of, and resource distribution to manage risk. The resulting political disputes may be demonstrative of tensions in the economy of risk (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996 p.428; McAlinden, 2016, pp.129-138). The result is often intensified law and regulation, prompted by public opinion and media campaigns (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238; Williams, 2015, p.28).

In modern society, one of the most notable contributors to discussions of law and regulation are paedophile hunters. Paedophile hunters expose and shame online groomers by using various methods to persuade groomers to be explicit about their interests and intentions (Campbell, 2016, p.350). Transcripts of these conversations can be found on many paedophile hunters' websites (Dark Justice, 2019; Sorell, 2019, p.158; YouTube, 2019). Methods differ internationally, but in the UK if a meeting is suggested, paedophile hunters go equipped with video recording devices and reveal themselves as the decoy with whom the groomer has been talking, and subsequently come to meet. Stinson Hunter, who once described himself as 'The Original Paedophile Hunter', still has in excess of 56,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel, which hints at the intrigue and appetite for the videos (YouTube, 2019). Likewise, Dark Justice have a similar number of subscribers, with some of their videos having been viewed over half a million times (YouTube, 2020). In many of the videos seen on YouTube, the meeting and subsequent confrontation takes place in a public location with many witnesses, which enables an element of shaming to be undertaken before the video is released online (Sorell, 2019, p.158; YouTube, 2019).

In UK courts, barristers acting for people prosecuted as a result of paedophile hunting activity have complained of a defect to the legal process when utilising paedophile hunters' evidence (Hadjimatheou, 2019, pp.7-8). There have also been claims made that paedophile hunters should be subject to the processes of applying for warrants to pose as children online, to reflect

the procedures that police officers are subject to when undertaking covert operations online (Hadjimatheou, 2019, pp.7-8). In both cases, this was rejected, and the judge upheld the right of paedophile hunters to identify groomers as private citizens rather than as public officials. Yet, the 2019 guidance issued by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS, 2019) makes it clear that *"Vigilantism is not merely unnecessary, it is unhelpful: anyone taking it upon themselves to seek out or investigate this kind of material where there is no legitimate duty to do so will be liable to prosecution."* (CPS, 2019; Hadjimatheou, 2019, pp.7-8; Sorell, 2019, p.158)

The seemingly confused discourse regarding paedophile hunting activity has contributed to the enthusiasm to undertake this research. There has been no research published providing a methodical charting or analysis of paedophile hunting groups, despite their existence having been documented in the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States and Russia (Hadjimatheou, 2019, p.6; Favarel-Garrigues, 2019, p.3; Grabosky, & Urbas, 2019, p.39; Sorell, 2019, p.154). The theme of this original research is understanding the activity of paedophile hunting groups in the United Kingdom, with reference to both public perceptions and perceptions of those working in offender management roles in the South of England. Prior to commencing this research, I was employed as a Probation Officer in the National Probation Service, managing a case load of around 40-50 high risk sexual and violent offenders. I have an academic background in Criminology, gaining my Postgraduate Degree in Criminology and Criminal Psychology in 2012 and later, a Graduate Diploma in Probation Practice in 2016. My interest in this research is formed by my professional experiences combined with my interest in the wider area of Criminology and Crime studies.

Rationale for the Research

The rationale for this study was multidimensional, based around my own practitioner experiences and the need for academic research on the topic. This relatively recent

phenomenon uses the internet, and particularly social media, to catch and, in some instances, publicize alleged offenders. Yet there is little academic research about the activity, or what the public think about these groups. Additionally, there has been no research examining the impact that this activity has on risk management by the probation and police services. The research is intended to be interdisciplinary in that it will consider the broad topic areas of risk management, public protection, internet-based or cyber-crime, quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research is intended to be an exploratory examination using a mixed methods approach to analyse attitudes and opinions relating to paedophile hunters. As such, there is no overall hypothesis being tested. Instead, the research intends to develop new knowledge, inform debate and to provide information for training and advice to police and probation practitioners.

My position as a practitioner means this research is grounded within an ‘insider research’ framework (Fleming, 2018, p.311). This is an important consideration regarding the chosen methodology and subsequent data analysis which will be explored in greater detail in chapter 3. The concept is introduced here by means of introduction. An insider research is often contrasted with research undertaken by an ‘outsider’ who is not employed by the organization within which the research is being conducted (Fleming, 2018, p.311). An insider researcher may be investigating parts of the organization previously unknown to them. The other end of the continuum, as has been the case in this research, is that the researcher is collecting data from close colleagues (Fleming, 2018, p.311). The development of the methodology used in this research was formulated and influenced by the insider element of my position, and this will be examined further in the proceeding chapters.

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to critically explore perceptions of both practitioners and the public regarding paedophile hunting groups. This will include an exploration of the effects that naming and shaming operations have on the management of community based, convicted sexual offenders. As previously stated, this issue has been informed by my own experience of working with sexual offenders both in the community and in custody as a qualified Probation Officer across two regions of the NPS. During my time working as a Probation Officer, I predominantly worked with offenders assessed as high risk of serious harm, convicted of both violent and sexual offences. I have worked both in a community and custodial setting in the South West South Central (SWSC) and London regions.

Research Aim: To critically understand public perceptions regarding sexual offenders and paedophile hunting groups, and to critically understand practitioner's attitudes and opinions relating to the impact, moral and ethical validity of, paedophile hunting activity when managing convicted sexual offenders in the community.

To achieve these aims, there are four research objectives. Firstly, to critically explore the academic literature available regarding sexual offending, public protection and paedophile hunters. Secondly, to understand the themes emerging from the academic literature, and examine what the implications are for the criminal justice system and specifically police, probation and the courts. Thirdly, to undertake interviews with police and probation practitioners, to understand their attitudes and opinions relating to the impact, moral and ethical validity of, paedophile hunting activity when managing convicted sexual offenders in the community. And finally, to undertake an online survey to generate understanding of public perceptions regarding sexual offenders and paedophile hunters.

Research Design

Paedophile hunting is a relatively recent phenomenon and so there is little research that directly examines paedophile hunter groups. What there has been is evidence of the activity having an impact on the management of convicted sexual offenders in the community and public concern regarding convicted sexual offenders. This research is therefore designed to be an exploratory examination using a mixed methods approach of in-depth qualitative interviews and an online survey. There is no overall hypothesis being tested, each element of the research design is independent. The qualitative and quantitative data could be separate research designs in their own right, however, they are combined in a mixed-methods research design here to generate knowledge that can help to explain this aspect of the social world. The qualitative interview data is presented first because it was collected in its entirety before the quantitative data. The online survey data closed after all the qualitative data was collected and therefore is presented second. To analyse all of the data collected, the constant comparative method is utilised as this allows connections to be made with broader contextual issues (Bryman, 2016, p.635). In this research, this is achieved by undertaking simultaneous analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, generating hypotheses, and then testing these using correlation analysis in SPSS. As a result, making links to broader contextual issues has been possible and whilst a new theory has not been generated as a result of this research, there has been a significant contribution to the knowledge base.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is made up of an additional six chapters throughout which the research aims, objectives and design are explored and developed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review is comprised of two sections. The first, defining paedophile hunters, summarises the existing knowledge regarding paedophile hunters, with particular attention being paid to the definitions, extent of, and possible explanations for the act of paedophile hunting. It also provides a critical exploration of theoretical and criminological explanations for these behaviours. The second section, implications for police, courts and probation, will examine what impact the politics of public protection and paedophile hunting activity is having on the criminal justice system. It has a particular focus on public notification, owing to its relevance to this research, but also considers sexual offending, risk management and desistance, and explores why these issues are so politically charged. The literature that will be considered will be from both legal and sociological discourses, with a focus on the conflicting dichotomies concerning the actions of paedophile hunting groups.

Chapter 3: Methodology will discuss the origins of the research which are based within my professional experience. It will examine the methods that were selected for the primary research, explaining why the methods were chosen. It will also address the important matter of being an insider researcher and explore some of the conflicts arising because of this, particularly the ethical considerations. Finally, there will be a reflection on the process of developing and undertaking the methodology, with a suggestion on how improvements might be made should this methodology be repeated.

Chapter 4: Practitioner Perspectives will outline the way in which the data was analysed before presenting the results emerging from the qualitative research. It will also begin to draw links between the literature and the research data collected from practitioners.

Chapter 5: Public Perceptions will outline the way in which the data was analysed before presenting the results emerging from the quantitative research. It will begin to draw links between the literature and the research data collected from the public.

Chapter 6: Discussion will synthesis the qualitative and quantitative data, as well as the primary and secondary data, in a discussion centred on how this research has made an original contribution to the existing pool of knowledge relating to paedophile hunters.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations will conclude the thesis and provide recommendations for further research.

This thesis is an original contribution to academic literature. Firstly, by providing insight into the emergence and development of organised paedophile hunting groups. And secondly, by providing a summary of the attitudes and opinions of both the public and professionals regarding these groups, identifying where further information and training may be beneficial. And finally, by outlining suggestions about possible responses to paedophile hunting activity, informed by views of practitioners working on the front line. There is potential for the findings to be of value to increasing public awareness regarding paedophile hunters. Moreover, the results will assist professionals working both within the National Probation Service and the Police.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

One of the most significant issues with this topic is the vast number of terms that are used interchangeably to describe the same thing. Whilst not an exhaustive list; paedophile hunters, digital vigilantes, cyberactivists, Online Child Abuse Activist Group (OCAG) and digilantes are all terms used to refer to the same type of activity. However, some researchers have been cautious about the continued use of the term vigilantism because it implies a limited and specific type of activity (Campbell, 2016, p.350). The term paedophile hunting is also problematic ethically, because the conception of *paedophile* implies that those who commit child sexual offences are innately predatory, and because *hunting* implies an activity targeted at animals, rather than people (Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.3). Whilst adapting existing theory can be important for conceptual development, doing so may be limiting if it is confined within criminological boundaries (Campbell, 2016, p.350). Consequently, and despite the inaccuracies of the term, paedophile hunter is the term used throughout this thesis. Whilst many of these people are not by definition, paedophiles, this is the term that is most commonly used by both the media and the public, as well as by professionals working within the criminal justice system. Therefore, it is deemed the most suitable term for adoption here.

This literature review is comprised of two sections. The first, defining paedophile hunters, which will explore definitions, the extent of, and possible explanations for the acts, as well as providing a critical exploration of theoretical and criminological explanations for these behaviours. The second, implications for police, courts and probation, will examine what impact the politics of public protection and paedophile hunting activity is having on the criminal justice system. It has a particular focus on public notification, because of its relevance

to this research, but also examines sexual offending, risk management and desistance, and explores why these issues are so politically charged. The literature that will be considered will be from both legal and sociological discourses, with a focus on the conflicting dichotomies concerning the actions of paedophile hunting groups.

Defining Paedophile Hunters

Evidence gathered by paedophile hunters led to 150 convictions in England and Wales during the 12 months to April 2018 (BBC, 2019; Gillespie, 2019, p.1015). In 2018, The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) documented that child abuse activism had continued unabated, and, whilst law enforcement data was incomplete, they estimated that occurrences were in the region of 100 per month across the UK (NPCC, 2018). The report went on to outline that analysis of incidents of paedophile hunting activity had revealed a mixed picture. With some groups having amended their mode of operation and in doing so, presenting packages of information and evidence to the police without having any real-world contact with the suspect (NPCC, 2018). The literature pertaining to naming and shaming (online or otherwise) is now well established, and research continues to document the unhelpfulness and risk associated with it (Boone & van de Bunt, 2016, p.37; NPCC, 2018). Similarly, the issue of child sexual grooming online has been documented. For instance, Williams (2015, p.39) succinctly concludes that one of the biggest challenges facing criminal justice agencies is that child sexual grooming is often identified only after an abusive episode and with the benefit of hindsight. Is it then reasonable to suggest that in the interest of managing or policing online child sexual grooming, paedophile hunting groups have developed and evolved?

Theoretical frameworks linked to defining paedophile hunters are set within the context of understanding the point to which the policing of online sexual offending involves a plethora of policing actors (Campbell, 2016, p.350; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90).

Indicative of what has been variously described as a shift to Nodal, Multi-lateral, or Networked policing, structures and patterns of policing are emerging in relation to the alleged 'exponential rise' in internet-based sexual offences, including both adult-oriented and child-centred forms of online sexual offending (Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Jewkes & Yar (2013, p.24) argue that the governance of online sexual offences does not simply reflect a shift towards the multi-lateral policing of crime but has come to exemplify it (Jewkes & Yar, 2013, p.24). Inasmuch as non-state authorities act in pre-emptive ways to report, monitor, regulate and in some cases disable suspicious online activity. The result is a multifaceted intervention which by-passes direct involvement of state actors (Jewkes & Yar, 2013, p.25). According to Jewkes & Yar (2013, p.30) this creates a model of crime control in which the police are placed at a distance (Jewkes & Yar, 2013, p.30; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90).

Labelling theory is a key theoretical framework which helps to develop understanding of the detriment of naming and shaming. Labelling theory argues self-identification of individuals may be determined by the terms used to classify them (Hamilton, 2017, p.15). The theory is based around the idea that whilst some criminological efforts to reduce crime are meant to help (for example rehabilitation), they may move offenders closer to lives of crime because of the label they assign the individuals engaging in the behaviour (Hamilton, 2017, p.15; Sjöström, 2017, pp.15-23). As society begin to treat these individuals on the basis of their labels, the individuals begin to accept the labels themselves (Sjöström, 2017, p 20). So, as an individual engages in a behaviour that is deemed by others as inappropriate, others label that person to be deviant, and eventually the individual internalizes and accepts this label. This notion of social reaction, reaction or response by others to the behaviour or individual, is central to labelling theory as is the understanding that negative reactions of others to a particular behaviour is what causes that behaviour to be labelled as criminal or deviant (Hamilton, 2017, p.15; Sjöström, 2017, pp.15-23). However, those critical of the theory highlight not only that labelling theory

overlooks the initial behaviour and there is ignorance to the fact that a serious crime may have taken place, but also that there is a lack of empirical evidence to validate the theory (Thio, 1995, p.118).

As with determining the scope and prevalence of public interest in paedophiles, exploring the impact of labelling theory with regard to paedophile hunters can be achieved in its simplest sense by exploring the public response and online activity following the dissemination of a paedophile hunting video. For example, in a video posted on YouTube by Dark Justice, the following comments were posted:

“Something's it's got to be done with these people mate. Maybe chemical castration is the answer”

“As a father of 2 daughter's keep up the good work lads, these scum-bags need to be exposed, named and shamed for the safety of everyone's children”

Similarly, on the Facebook page of TRAP, comments posted under videos include:

“Seriously can't believe there's people like this out there and especially so close to home too! Keep on doing what you're doing man, get these twats off the street!”

“Dunno how you do all this and stay calm? I'd just wanna smash his face in. Kudos to you mate and keep up the good work”

These comments were chosen at random, and may not be representative of every respondent, but they do highlight the difficulty for so-called offenders to return as contributors to their communities. They optimise labelling theory inasmuch as an individual has engaged in a behaviour that is deemed by others to be inappropriate, and the others have labelled that person as deviant, and eventually the individual concerned accepts this label (Hamilton, 2017, p.15; Sjöström, 2017, pp.15-23). These very public responses and comments are indicative of stigmatizing offenders, and evidence of how online communities are no longer an escape from

offline responsibilities but are becoming meaningful extensions of it across a broader span of time and space (Wall & Williams, 2007, p.413). In research conducted by Dunsby & Howes (2019, p.56) it was revealed that whilst many Facebook users generally regard the naming and shaming of convicted or suspected persons as inappropriate, this was not the case when it came to protecting the community from sexual offenders. In this research, endorsement of online naming and shaming was also attributed to a lack of faith in the criminal justice system and a desire to assist the police (Dunsby & Howes, 2019, p.56).

Whilst theoretical frameworks can provide evidence of the unhelpfulness of naming and shaming, there still appears to be an emphasis on the public's retributive preferences with regard to sexual crime (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.731). The appetite for which could be the main motivation for paedophile hunters. In attempting to define paedophile hunters, the first and most prominent question is whether they are vigilantes? From a socio-political standpoint, vigilantism has primarily been considered as typically violent expressions of a collective group seeking to assert or to restore order through direct punishment, in defiance of existing legal frameworks (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23). Criminologists on the other hand have reasoned that some vigilante action can remain within the boundaries of the law and does not always involve punishment. They have therefore tended to address vigilantism as a structured and forceful reaction to criminal or social/moral transgressions on the part of volunteer citizens, whose objective is to ensure the security of an established order (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23). If we take this as an accepted definition of vigilantism, it begins to raise questions about what acceptable forms of justice are (Hill & Wall, 2015).

The NPCC's typologies of the different groups of paedophile hunters currently operating in the UK, help to begin charting what they deem acceptable forms of justice to be. The four-point

typology of operation which the NPCC describe as imprecise outlines the four typologies as: type 1, Law Enforcement, which describes people and organisations who engage in policing activities with the appropriate training, safeguards and control measures. Type 2, Passive Partners, which describes organisations and individuals who gather information passively but who do not undertake proactive activity. The NPCC's position is that it is reasonable for Law Enforcement agencies to continue to actively engage with this group of partners as they are not engaging in undercover work (NPCC, 2018). Type 3, E-Activists, described as OCAGs that engage in undercover tactics but who pass enforcement material to law enforcement agencies prior to any real-world contact. The NPCC's position on these groups is that whilst policing cannot develop relationships with these groups, since their activity stops short of real-world contact, it is less likely that this activity will be unhelpful to policing (NPCC, 2018). Finally, type 4, Real World Activists. The NPCC describe this group as OCAGs that engage in real world contact with suspected perpetrators (NPCC, 2018). The NPCC's position on paedophile hunting groups (or OCAGs) is that their motivation should be questioned since there is no positive advantage to policing and yet such activism increases risk to potential victims, the suspect and to the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal justice processes (NPCC, 2018).

Within this document, as well as defining the four typologies of paedophile hunting groups outlined above, the NPCC also identify reasons that activity from type 4 groups (and sometimes type 3) can be unhelpful. These include criminality, some OCAG activity may mask underlying activist criminality and it is difficult to distinguish this without effort. This effort (vetting or monitoring), in itself, is a diversion of resource (see Police 8, 9 & 10). Lacking safeguards, because OCAG activity does not routinely consider wider safeguarding issues relating to further uncontrolled offending post challenge; offenders may become vulnerable to self-harm or secondary abuse and extortion (see Police 1, 2, 7 & 11). Loss of evidence, OCAG activity risks loss of evidence where offenders are not effectively controlled post challenge. Poor

disclosure and controls may jeopardize prosecutions. Untargeted, OCAG's activity is not targeted so the total threat exceeds capacity. OCAG activity does not consider the severity of harm and may divert activity from higher priority towards unassessed threat (see Police 10). Inefficiency, response to OCAG activity is inefficient. Building prosecution cases from practice that is unregulated is less efficient than starting from a base of good operational practice (NPCC, 2018).

Alternative typologies of online activism have been suggested within the academic literature. These include:

Websleuthing - Jewkes (2015, p.4) defines websleuthing as the 'embodiment of participatory media' and as with paedophile hunters, research concerning websleuthing is currently limited (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). Websleuthing has been identified as different from paedophile hunters because whilst vigilantism is evident in some websleuth activity, they are more than vigilantes (Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). Websleuthing is seemingly more varied and, unlike paedophile hunting groups, websleuths adapt, assume and create online spaces as places to congregate, engage in discussion, conduct research and host content. However, with motivations that may be similar to those of paedophile hunters, can any meaningful difference be identified between these online activities?

Digilantism - Digilantism, also termed digital vigilantism, internet vigilantism and cyber-vigilantism, has been described as one person's reaction to another person's transgression of social norms in the online space (Dunsby, & Howes, 2018, p.2; Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24). Loveluck (2019, p.25) helpfully defines digital vigilantism as 'direct online actions of targeted surveillance, dissuasion or punishment which tend to rely on public denunciation or an excess of unsolicited attention, and are carried out in the name of justice, order or safety'. Sorell (2019,

p.154) describes vigilantism as ‘punishment through online exposure of supposed wrongdoing.’ Vigilantism involves those who identify the perceived wrongdoing and an online audience who are expected to decide that agreed norms have been violated. It is widely agreed in vigilantism that the norms violated sometimes equate to criminal activity, but not always. Vigilantism can also target sub-criminal activity but audiences for vigilantism in all its forms are often recruited from pre-existing online subgroups with identifiable positions on such things as feminism, animal welfare and weapons control (Sorell, 2019, p.154). It can include naming and shaming, citizen-led cyber-stings, and crowdsourced policing. The main interest of this thesis is a particular type of digital vigilantism - paedophile hunters. Crimes of a sexual nature are clearly abhorrent crimes that generate high levels of public interest and scrutiny. Naming and shaming offenders online allows members of the public to contribute, joining with more ‘traditional’ media sources to challenge perceived inadequate responses by the criminal justice system (Powell, 2015) and call for offenders to be held to account (Dunsby, & Howes, 2018, p.14).

Cyber-Vigilantism - Smallridge, Wagner and Crowl (2016, p.58) outline a conceptual framework for cyber-vigilantism. One of which is crowdsourcing for justice where justice-seeking civilians collectively pool their expertise in response to real and perceived societal wrongs. A distinction is made between organised and spontaneous crowdsourced activities. On the one hand, there are relatively organized civilian groups that rely upon the expertise of initiated volunteers to carry out their activities. Well organized civilian groups engage in a variety of activities to identify criminals who operate online. In contrast, there are short-lived groups that mobilize in response to a particular injustice or social wrong. These groups generally dissipate quickly as the initial disturbance of the event fades (Smallridge et al., 2016, pp.62–63). Smallridge et al. (2016, p.62) name the paedophile hunting group Perverted Justice

as an example of organised crowdsourcing for justice. The organised versus spontaneous dichotomy is an interesting one as it acknowledges differing motives, skillsets, patterns and divisions of labour (Smallridge et al., 2016, pp.62–63).

Citizen Lead Policing - In recent years paedophile hunting has attracted significant media coverage in the US, UK and Europe (Campbell, 2016, p.345). Whilst this novel style of policing carries no legal or moral authority, it does appear to be taking hold within a pluralised policing landscape where its effectiveness at apprehending sexual offenders is capturing public attention (Campbell, 2016, p.345). The emergence of paedophile hunting activity raises normative questions of where the boundaries of citizen involvement in policing affairs might be drawn (Campbell, 2016, p.345). Citizen involvement in the provision of policing is often viewed positively as an effective way of relieving pressure on police resources while building stronger, more responsible and democratically engaged communities (Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.1). Police forces in the United Kingdom have increasingly adopted a ‘strategy of responsibilities’ designed to encourage and support citizens to take on tasks otherwise left for police (Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.1). Against a backdrop of dwindling police numbers, citizen-led digital police often challenge democratic principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law. Conversely though, like other civilian policing initiatives, they also appear to increase empowerment and participation. For their success, they rely upon the presence of strong and legitimate institutions of justice, for which paedophile hunters have the monopoly (Campbell, 2016, p.345; Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.1). Berg & Shearing (2018, p.72) document that there is a pervasive view that only the ‘public police’ can or should protect the public interest. They go so far as to argue that public policing may not always be the most effective way of producing public safety and security. Instead, they suggest an approach of non-crime strategies and private security agents as participants in public safety as more

effective (Berg & Shearing, 2018, p.72). The question is then, rather than focusing on who is or is not providing policing, should we look to move toward *how* policing is provided and whether it can contribute to overarching objectives, even if that includes utilising paedophile hunters (Berg & Shearing, 2018, p.83)?

Explanations for engaging in any kind of online activism are varied, and as with traditional forms of vigilantism, are not usually a matter of personal revenge (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24). However, the nuances of the digital environment have redefined speech, and although public denunciations have always involved an element of potential violence, the online environment makes this easier than ever. Especially in cases of paedophile hunting where publication of information alone can entail punitive consequences by generating negative publicity long before the complete facts are established (Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24). This fact is often compounded in paedophile hunting situations because the events are often relayed by mainstream media who, simply by documenting an event, in fact widely expand its audience (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24). Online activism has been described as ‘easily set off’ but ‘rife with mistakes and unintended consequences’ (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24). Understood as both a moral and a political phenomenon, it is an increasingly accessible means of transforming anger or assumptions of injustice into active action online and as in the case of paedophile hunters, sometimes in meetings offline also (Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24).

A complex debate is now emerging over the extent to which the police should work with forms of online activism, in particular paedophile hunters. Some are considered vigilantes or ‘digilantes’ acting outside of the law, but vigilantism is a contested concept within criminology, making it difficult to define (Powell, Stratton, & Cameron, 2018, p.139). Others are viewed as a useful information source that is increasingly being used in successful prosecutions

(Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.10). This difference in perception may be a result of there being different types of actors, with different motivations, engaging in different strategies with very different outcomes (Powell, Stratton, & Cameron, 2018, p.139). Nonetheless, there are social justice contexts of inequality of marginalised groups in which such vigilantism might be viewed as justifiable, even legitimate (Powell, Stratton, & Cameron, 2018, p.141). But vigilantism can also result in serious human rights violations, and according to Powell, Stratton, & Cameron (2018, p.142), many acts of online activism exceed the boundaries instituted by those seeking to confine the concept of vigilantism. Concerns are therefore likely to persist and grow simultaneously as issues around resourcing for policing online continue to emerge. Key challenges are likely to remain where police are required to determine the line between justified covert interactions with criminals and unjustified entrapment (Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.10).

The increased popularity of this citizen-initiated cyber-policing has invited media commentary which does not always appear to warn against the implications of a shift towards an antiquated form of justice in the same way that academic literature does (Campbell, 2016, p.350). And so, despite widespread concerns about paedophile hunting, this form of policing has not only continued to flourish and intensify, but arguably has also started to connect and align with existing networks of authorised and legitimate policing provision (The Guardian, 2017; Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Such a development moves the police and public collaboration well beyond its conventional, and relatively harmless responsibility of providing the police with additional ‘eyes and ears’. In so doing, it poses normative questions of where the boundaries of citizen involvement in policing affairs should be drawn (Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90).

There are, of course, opposing views, which take a much more supportive view of a community led policing approach. Their argument being that a successful blend of social, technological

and legal controls is required if the Internet is to see a reduction in forms of online deviance (Williams, 2007, pp.59-82). Williams (2007, pp.59-82) argues that such an approach, where recourses and responsibilities are shared, diffuses power across a diverse field of security and governance. If paedophile hunters are to establish themselves or become established within a pluralised policing landscape, then resolving issues around whether they are legitimate entities with scope to provide a formal policing role is essential (Berg & Shearing, 2018, p.72). Notwithstanding how this style of citizen-led policing emerges, we must also consider how it develops as an identifiable policing form, and how it gains influence with authorised policing actors (Campbell, 2016, p.345; Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Does the criminal justice system have a responsibility towards thinking through the conditions and potential for this kind of police work (Campbell, 2016, p.345; Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90)? Paedophile hunters not only create a dialogue concerning conventional multifaceted policing and how it is assembled, but they also cast an investigative spotlight on the social and cultural relations through which new security networks are created and organised (Campbell, 2016, p. 345; Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90).

Paedophile hunting groups such as TRAP, Dark Justice and Justice4children commonly pose as children online. In an interview with the BBC, a member of the paedophile hunting group Guardians of the North (established 2016) said;

“I’m a live decoy for a paedophile hunting group. That means I don’t just talk to suspected paedophiles online: I turn up in person to meet them. Our investigations always start online. I have accounts on lots of different social networks. My profile is always public so anyone can view it and message me. One of them looks like it belongs to a 14-year-old girl. I use a fake name but I still have my own photos. They are normal pictures – often just head and shoulders. My real age is 23 but I can do it because I still look young. I’m a small build with a youthful face. I think it helps that I sound young too because I speak to the people on the phone when necessary. I get messages every day. I never contact anyone first. I always wait for them to get in touch with me – and I make it clear on these profiles that I’m a 14-year-old girl.” (BBC, 2019)

After waiting for contact to be made and then encouraging a meeting where the individual is publicly exposed, the confrontation video is often uploaded to the internet, usually via social media (Hill & Wall, 2015). The question of whether the strategies employed are consistent with an acceptable concept of justice, becomes more interesting as instances of deaths linked to paedophile hunting activity occur. For example, David Baker, who was caught by Southampton based group 'TRAP', overdosed after being released under investigation by police (BBC, 2018). Michael Parkes, who was confronted by another well-known 'Hunter', Stinston Hunter, hung himself after being questioned by Police (The Guardian, 2014). Despite these cases being the exception, rather than the rule, Hill & Wall (2015) ask whether should rethink our current understanding of policing and public engagement if, despite the deaths, the strategies employed are consistent with an acceptable concept of justice.

To explain the motivation for paedophile hunters, Pickett et al. (2013, p.735) have identified three distinct theoretical models. The first is the victim-oriented concerns model, which focuses on popular concerns about sexual crime victims tending to be young, female, and permanently damaged by their victimization (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.735; Jenkins, 1998; Lynch, 2002). The second is the sexual offender stereotypes model. This identifies a set of common stereotypes characterizing sexual offenders as monstrous, evil strangers who prey on the vulnerable without remorse and who are untreatable (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.735; Quinn, Forsyth & Mullen-Quinn, 2004; Spencer, 2009). The third is the risk-management concerns model that emphasizes the role of concerns about increasing rates of sexual victimization and the difficulties of defending against sexual predators (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.735; Lancaster, 2011; Simon, 1998).

This leaves the question of why there appears to be a growing hunger for, and an increasing

number of, paedophile hunter groups? Certainly, there is a suggestion that they are attempting to fill a gap left by reducing police numbers (Hill & Wall, 2015; Haas, Keijser & Bruinsma, 2014, p.225; NPCC, 2018). The relationship between the police and paedophile hunters is complicated. The police may make public appeals for information that may trigger vigilante responses or may otherwise make use of data collected by paedophile hunting efforts (see Dark Justice 'Our Statistics'). These developments are not the first instance of police-public cooperation, however digital media facilitates a new purpose for police appeals or content for non-police investigations. Therefore, private entities such as social media platforms could be said to be complicit actors in paedophile hunter campaigns insofar as they facilitate such coordination (Trottier, 2017, p.28).

In July 2018, the National Police Chief's Council published their 'Responding to Online Child Abuse Activists' document which outlined the official response of UK police forces to the newly named Online Child Abuse Activist Groups (OCAGs). The document acknowledged the growth of paedophile hunting activity across the country and defined the four typologies of the different groups currently operating in the UK. The policy document also inferred that the increase in police funding for online investigations was likely to reduce the need for such groups in the future. Perhaps most interesting though, was the decision to 'adopt a position that, based upon current experience, the overall operational impact of OCAG's is not a positive one in the effort to tackle child abuse' (NPCC, 2018). The following chapters will show, by presenting data collected as part of this original research, that this position is not one that is shared by all police (and probation) practitioners on the ground.

In essence, this online activity is self-perpetuating in that the more instances of paedophile hunters 'successes' that are documented, the more coverage these groups get, and the more members of the public are exposed to it (Loveluck, 2019, p.24). In recent years, media attention

has been drawn to the activities of numerous paedophile hunting groups operating in the UK, generating headlines such as ‘Paedophile hunters chase man across Hull in ten-hour sting’ (Hull Daily Mail, 2019), ‘Southampton paedophile hunter jailed for false claim (BBC News, 2018), ‘Police ‘may consider’ working with paedophile hunters’ (The Guardian, 2017).

Implications for Police, Courts and Probation

Risk Management, Desistance and Sexual Offending

The issues of risk management, desistance and sexual offending are fundamental to our understanding of the possible impact of paedophile hunting activity on the ability of statutory agencies to manage risk. Of equal importance is understanding how naming and shaming and labelling theory affect risk management and desistance. Since the 1990s, risk has become a central component of the criminal justice system (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997, p.5). Within the focus on risk, the management of people who have committed sexual offences has, in particular, become a public protection concern (Hoggett McCartan & O’Sullivan, 2019, p.2). Pertinent to risk management, labelling theory outlines how paedophile hunting activity can increase an individual’s risk, by causing them to withdraw and take on the label they have been attributed (Hamilton, 2017, p.15; Sjöström, 2017, pp.15-23). As such, criminal justice policy and practice habitually develop, and the understanding, assessment and management of risks have become central pre-occupations (Hoggett, McCartan & O’Sullivan, 2019, p.2). This is often associated with the development of the risk society (Beck, 1992) where rapid social changes in the late 20th century arguably led to the breakdown of community and the spread of fear from resultant insecurity (Hoggett, McCartan & O’Sullivan, 2019, p.5). Ericson and Haggerty (1997, p.253) suggest, ‘the focus in criminal justice becomes the efficient production and distribution of risk knowledge for the management of populations of victims, informants, suspects, accused, and offenders.’

Risk assessments impact greatly on an individual's progress through the criminal justice system. For assessors, this carries a responsibility and the need to ensure that the methods utilised to assess the risk are meaningful in terms of being predictive of actual reductions in the risk of recidivism (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). The issue of how to incorporate information related to individual change into assessments of risk becomes especially relevant when considering that the implication of a reduction in estimated risk, is key to an individual progressing through the system (Cording et al., 2019, p.230). The impact of focusing on risk management has therefore been, that the criminal justice system and those who work within and are subject to it, has been debated extensively (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p. 20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). One of the most high-profile areas within which this shift can be observed, is in response to sexual offending (Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198). Indeed, it has been argued that sexual offenders offer a unique kind of risk for the criminal justice system to assess and manage. Evidence of this can be seen in the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda (Ministry of Justice, 2013). The TR agenda split the Probation service into two parts. It does not allow private companies to take ownership of the management of sexual offenders, regardless of their level of risk, as they do with all other types of low or medium risk offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Plainly, risk management of convicted sexual offenders is of central importance to the government and the criminal justice system, and the reduction in the rates of re-offending is a primary focus for the agencies involved in case management (Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198).

As such, public discussion concerning the threat of the sexual offender is related to everyday life, saturated with experience, and highly perpetuated by the media (McAlinden, 2016, p.129). The direction for release of John Worboys, the prevalence of sexual abuse in Hollywood and

the resulting ‘#timesup’ campaign, and the re-conviction of the man formerly known as Jon Venables are all recent examples of acts of a sexual nature being widely reported and publicised (BBC, 2018). The resulting public discussion around sexual offending creates an interesting dichotomy, where it is at odds with the criminal justice system’s calculated knowledge of risk, risk assessment and management (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). In debates about public safety, particularly around community notification, the concept of risk increasingly yields a discursive framework which often leads to responses being conceived, designed, implemented and legitimated (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). Perhaps the most infamous UK example of this is the News of the World’s ‘Naming and Shaming’ campaign following the murder of Sarah Payne by Roy Whiting. After his conviction, it was revealed that Whiting had already been convicted of a previous sexual offence and this revelation added fuel to the already well-established fire that was the Naming and Shaming campaign (Savage & Charman, 2010, p.436).

Desistance

The good lives model proposes 10 primary goods that are thought to be common to all individuals which, when secured, contribute to enhanced personal satisfaction. Attainment of primary human goods is said to promote desistance from crime and is a central focus of rehabilitation of offenders under the Offender Rehabilitation Act legislation introduced in 2014 (HMIP, 2017, p.42). However, individuals convicted of sexual offences face significant difficulties upon their reintegration into the community, many of which are likely to undermine their ability to obtain such goods and many of which are exasperated by experiences of naming and shaming and labelling (Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). Criminological research into desistance indicates that a person’s social situation is an important factor associated with desistance (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). Some

desistance research concludes external factors are more important than internal ones in terms of achieving desistance. Yet in the case of sexual offending, restrictive external circumstances such as imprisonment, residency restrictions, social isolation, and restricted employment opportunities are frequently imposed (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). If external conditions are guided by evidence, they can be an important part of the risk management processes. But as well as emulating the accepted definition of a risk factor for sexual offending, protective factors should be empirically related to desistance from sexual offending (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p. 20). Once again, the act of labelling and shaming individuals is at odds with the process of desistance and may cause individuals to ‘live up’ to the criminal labels applied to them (Hamilton, 2017, p.15; Sjöström, 2017, pp.15-23).

The concept of desistance relates to the process of abstaining from crime after repeated or habitual engagement in criminal activities (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.21; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.199). Desistance processes often involve key turning points or disorienting life episodes (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198), but desistance is not a single moment or event in a person’s life. Instead, it is widely understood as a long-term process involving an eventual recognition of the need to change, motivational fluctuation, and possible false starts followed by lapses or relapses (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20). The factors identified in desistance literature relevant to sexual offending are ageing, stable employment, marriage, abstinence from substances, lack of stress, and good mental health. These have all been found to have a protective effect on criminal behaviour (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). Those who desist seem to hold consistent patterns of cognition that encompass the ability to evaluate one’s behaviour and learn from mistakes (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.22; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.201). Arguably, one indicator of this willingness to change is the individual’s level of engagement with an intervention to change risk-relevant behaviour, such as Probation

Supervision or Police Offender Management (HMIP, 2017). Desistance literature has established the importance of moving away from groups of anti-social peers and establishing meaningful intimate relationships (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.25; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198). The latter being the contrary of “lack of emotional intimacy with others”, which is a strongly evidenced risk factor for sexual offending (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). Desistance research has identified new considerations in criminology with distinct implications for assessment and treatment practice (HMIP, 2017). In the past 3 years, there has been a shift in the risk assessment tools used to assess risk of serious harm and risk of recidivism in sexual offenders.

The primary risk assessment tools, OASys and RM2000 focus almost exclusively on factors that raise risk for recidivism and the assessment of risks and needs are “deficit focused” (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17). However, the introduction of the ARMS risk assessment tool in 2016 indicates there may have been a shift away from traditional risk-only evaluations which have been described as ‘inherently inaccurate’ and ‘implicitly biased’ (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.18). If deficit-focused assessments can be stigmatizing for offenders, this raises the possibility that the emphasis on risks found in traditional assessment processes will have a negative impact on the relationship between the assessor and the assessed, and consequently perhaps on the rehabilitation process itself (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). Yet there is a clear paradox with regard to desistance theory. As a probation officer or police offender manager, if someone you are supervising is caught by paedophile hunters, it invariably creates issues around risk and risk management (see Police 7, 8, 9 & Probation 4, 7, 9). The paradox created is that they are not desisting from offending because if prosecuted, they have been caught. Therefore, there is an argument to say that desistance is not working because these individuals are still offending, despite being managed.

Sexual Offenders

If statutory agencies and those overseeing the (risk) management of sexual offenders in the community are recognising the benefit of changing the risk rhetoric to be more inclusive of protective factors, what implications do actions by paedophile hunting groups have in terms of risk and recidivism? An important consideration here is the development of social movements aided by new technology. The growth of the Internet as a revolutionary technology has been swift (Willoughby, 2019, p.127) and has radically altered the way individuals interact with each other. The growth of the Internet, and in particular social media, as a virtual space where people spend an increasingly large amount of time, means we must recognise the challenges of defining, monitoring and policing such a rapidly evolving digital form (Willoughby, 2019, p.130). It is important to recognise that the actions of paedophile hunters are now so prominent due to developments in accessibility to information.

Carty (2015, pp.6-7) explains that social movements, unlike other forms of collective behaviour is a sustained, collective voicing of resistance and the availability of technology aids how actors organise campaigns (Loveluck, 2019, p. 23-24). What makes paedophile hunters unique, is the moral and ethical dilemma surrounding them as it seems to add to the debate about the suitable punishment and effective risk assessment of sexual offenders (Hill & Wall, 2015). It is a nuance that has little research basis currently, but what is clear is that inaccurate beliefs about the nature and extent of sexual offending are strongly linked with policy preferences (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996, p.430; Williams, 2015, p.28). For instance, the perception that sexual crime is on the rise, and the view that sexual offenders are untreatable or unchangeable - beliefs which are perpetuated by the omnipresence of paedophile hunters (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996, p.430) – helps to increase support for punitive sexual crime laws and policies. Yet, overwhelmingly, the available evidence shows not only that sexual victimization rates are not rising, but that

overly punitive responses to sexual offenders can be counterproductive both in terms of reducing recidivism and reducing risk (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.36; Hebenton & Thomas, 1996, p.430).

Pickett et al (2013, p.736) identify two important motivations for punitiveness which can be applied to paedophile hunters. These being the desire for just desserts, emerging from moral outrage over both the harm inflicted on victims and the violation of societal norms; and the aspiration for deterrence and incapacitation, stemming from concerns about personal safety (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.736). The victim-oriented concerns model builds on the just desserts account, suggesting that moral outrage over the sexual victimization of vulnerable victims is a key source of hostility toward sexual offenders. The risk-management concerns model highlights the potential utilitarian motive for supporting harsh sexual offender laws. Namely, that such laws represent an effective tactic for deterring future offending and managing the perceived risk posed by sexual offenders. Finally, the sexual offender stereotypes model associates both motives and proposes that certain conceptions of sexual offenders may increase moral outrage and the perceived need for regulating and incapacitating such offenders (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.736).

So should society be concerned with the sexual offender? All humans seek certain goods to construct a sense of identity and purpose (ten Bensele & Sample, 2017, pp.509-510). People are driven to achieve recognition that they possess the skills and resources necessary to achieve important goals. Sexual offenders are no exception (ten Bensele & Sample, 2017, pp.509-510). Constructing a narrative identity can provide a holistic picture of the individual, separate from or inclusive of their offending. The result being a move away from maladaptive effects of criminal labelling and toward rehabilitation (ten Bensele & Sample, 2017, pp.509-510).

Paedophile Hunters and the Courts

In July 2018 the Court of Appeal (R v TL [2018] EWCA Crim 1821) heard that a judge had applied the wrong test when staying as an abuse of process, on the basis of entrapment by a private citizen. The judge had made a mistake in not distinguishing between the conduct of a private citizen and that of state agents when making a finding of entrapment (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). Therefore, the prosecution appealed against a decision to stay as an abuse of process criminal proceedings brought against the respondent because it was alleged that the respondent had attempted to meet a child following sexual grooming. He had communicated online with a person he believed to be a 14-year-old girl, but he was actually communicating with an adult male. The respondent's pre-trial application to stay the proceedings as an abuse of process on the basis of entrapment, relying on Looseley case law was refused (R. v Looseley, 2001). At the end of the prosecution case, the respondent's renewed application for a stay was granted on the basis that such vigilante groups incited offences which would otherwise not be committed (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). The Court of Appeal, while overturning the stay of prosecution, concluded by saying:

“In reaching this conclusion, we do not seek to undermine or contradict the stated position of the police, by which they discourage [paedophile hunters]. [The police] have concerns that...the zeal of some ‘vigilantes’ may lead them to seriously improper conduct. It would be much better for [paedophile hunters] immediately they have suspicions about the conduct of an identifiable individual to involve the police and leave them to investigate.” (R v TL [2018] EWCA Crim 1821)

Two additional yet contrasting Crown Court cases further demonstrate the difficulties paedophile hunting activity poses in the Courts. In R. v Walters and Ali (2017), the judge rejected an application to stay an indictment based on the activities of a paedophile hunting activity. Yet in R. v Slusalarczik (2018), the judge did stay an indictment, stating that the activities of paedophile hunters brought the criminal justice system into disrepute. There have

been a number of successful prosecutions following paedophile hunting activity (Dark Justice, 2017; BBC 2019), but concern has evidently grown about the appropriateness of accepting the evidence of paedophile hunters (Gillespie, 2019, p.1015). But does condemnation by Judges in the Courts go far enough? Whilst the Court of Appeal may have decided that relying on the evidence gathered by paedophile hunters constituted an abuse of process (*R v TL* [2018] EWCA Crim 1821) some have argued that it is not for the courts to tackle paedophile hunters (Gillespie, 2019, p.1015). The question of whether the courts should hear evidence from paedophile hunters is arguably a policy decision for the government and not for the courts or indeed the Police. Yet in the absence of a ban, the courts must do what they can to balance the need to prosecute those who have potentially committed serious crimes with the rights of those coerced into committing a crime (Gillespie, 2019, p.1015).

More recently in *Sutherland v Her Majesty's Advocate* [2020] UKSC 32, the appeal discussed whether prosecutions based on the covert sting operations of paedophile hunters are compatible with the right to private life and correspondence. In 2018, Mr Sutherland matched on a dating application with somebody who, when he communicated with them, claimed to be a 13-year old child. He sent sexual messages and images to that person, and they eventually arranged to meet at Partick station. In fact, he was speaking to an adult member of a paedophile hunter group. Members of that group confronted Mr Sutherland at the meeting point at the arranged time. They broadcast the encounter on social media and handed the evidence to the police. Mr Sutherland was convicted of attempting to communicate indecently with an older child and related offences. He appealed against his conviction on the basis that the covert investigation (and the use of the resulting evidence by the prosecuting authorities) breached his right to respect for his private life and correspondence under ECHR Article 8.

The Supreme Court unanimously dismissed the appeal. The court held that there was no interference with his rights at any stage because the nature of the communications rendered them incapable of being worthy of respect under Article 8. And the appellant had no reasonable expectation of privacy in relation to the communications. Furthermore, the judgement concludes that the state had no supervening positive obligation to protect the appellant's interests that would prevent the respondent making use of the evidence to investigate or prosecute the crime. On the contrary, the relevant positive obligation on the respondent was to ensure that the criminal law could be applied effectively to deter sexual offences against children. Article 8 has the effect that the respondent should be entitled to, and might indeed be obliged to, make use of the evidence in bringing a prosecution against him (*Sutherland v Her Majesty's Advocate* [2020] UKSC 32).

These cases demonstrate how complicated the relationship between the police, courts and paedophile hunters is. Whilst agents of the state may dislike the activities of paedophile hunters (NPCC, 2018), they cannot ignore evidence passed to them. To that end, must we conclude that the criminal justice system reluctantly concedes with the activities of paedophile hunters?

Paedophile Hunters, Police and Probation

Evidently, one of the central issues regarding paedophile hunters is the issue of public protection and risk management, and indeed, who is responsible for this. Campbell (2016, p.350) succinctly outlines that in the UK, paedophilia is represented across five core public protection elements including; robust legislative frameworks statutory checks and disclosures; sexual offender registries and notification schemes (both of which are explored later in this chapter); the development of transnational policing organisations representing both the voluntary and private sector; the establishment of specialist national level policing units; and finally the growth of a market of 'anti-paedophile software' (Campbell, 2016, p.350). In short,

paedophilia creates an expansive space for governance, and a diversification of the means and methods for responding to it (Campbell, 2016, p.350; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238; McAlinden, 2010, p.386).

In the UK, statutory management of sexual offenders originates from a number of policies including the Criminal Justice Act 2003; the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000; the Sex Offenders Act 1997; and the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (McCartan, Hoggett, & O'Sullivan, 2017, p.2). Largely, it focuses on public protection and punitive sentencing as a basis for risk management (Nash, 2016; Williams & Nash, 2014). Current management policies for perpetrators of sexual harm include establishing the sexual offenders' register and multi-agency risk assessment and risk management of sexual offenders, often overseen by the Probation Service (McCartan, Hoggett & O'Sullivan, 2017, pp.2-3).

The Probation Service has a statutory responsibility for conditions and supervision for all offenders, with reporting conditions set out by the Home Office (Home Office, 1995). In relation to sexual offences, in England and Wales, local authorities are permitted to have notice of the discharge of such an offender from prison (NOMS, 2015, PSI 72/2011). Even after supervision, surveillance may be continued on known Schedule One offenders by Children's Services, if the offender comes into contact with children in a household. Additionally, since its inception in September 1997, the sexual offenders' register has contained details of anyone convicted, cautioned or released from prison for a sexual offence against a child or adult (McCartan, Hoggett & O'Sullivan, 2017, pp.2-3). Convicted perpetrators of sexual harm remain on the register for differing periods of time, ranging from one year to lifetime registration, depending upon their offence and sentence (Kemshall et al., 2010; Prison Reform Trust, 2015).

To enable the criminal justice system, but especially the police, to better manage and preserve the sexual offenders' register in England and Wales, a new overarching intelligence database called ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offenders' Register) was developed (Edwards, 2003; ViSOR National User Group, 2013). ViSOR was rolled out to all UK police forces by mid-2005 and although the police are responsible for ViSOR, it can now be accessed and used by the National Probation Service and HM Prison Service as well. Initially, the register was developed and only used by professionals to assist them in their offender management and investigative roles (Harris, Walfield, et al., 2016; Thomas, 2010). However, several high-profile cases, such as Megan Kanka (USA) and Sarah Payne (UK), changed this, with risk management and public protection becoming the main driving force. In the UK, this started following the murder of Sarah Payne by Roy Whiting, and the News of the World campaign that followed (McCartan, 2010). After being sentenced for Sarah's murder, it was revealed that Whiting already had a conviction of a sexual nature and so the government were keen to develop a model for the community notification of information about perpetrators of sexual harm. However, they did not want to replicate the American model, which includes, in extreme cases, full and unrestricted public disclosure (Kemshall et al., 2010).

Public Notification

It is particularly relevant to consider the issue of public notification relative to paedophile hunting groups and there are numerous frameworks which help us to understand the detriment of community notification and naming and shaming, including, digilantism as discussed earlier, also termed digital vigilantism, internet vigilantism and cyber-vigilantism, which can be described as one person's reaction to another person's transgression of social norms in the online space (Dunsby, & Howes, 2018, p.2). It can include naming and shaming, hacktivism, citizen-led cyber-stings, and crowdsourced policing. The main interest of this thesis, and as

one type of digital vigilantism, naming and shaming refers to identifying alleged offenders and subjecting them to embarrassment, harassment, and/or condemnation (Dunsby, & Howes, 2018, p.2). The motivations for these reactions have been documented as public concern about certain types of crimes, and therefore justification for naming and shaming in response to severity of crime may be anticipated (Dunsby, & Howes, 2018, p.14). Crimes such as sexual assault are abhorrent crimes, naming and shaming offenders online allows members of the public to contribute to the mediascape, joining with traditional media to challenge inadequate responses of the criminal justice system (Powell, 2015) and call for offenders to be held to account.

As Prins (2010, p.18) outlines, there has been considerable growth in the ‘risk industry’ and the centrality of risk assessment and risk management to almost all organizations has generated a responsibility for the distribution of knowledge for risk management (Prins, 2018 p.18; Heberton & Thomas, 1996, pp.428-429). Critical to the debate regarding community notification are institutions such as Police and Probation that can be said to reconfigure society into communications about risk and are responsible for the monitoring and management of sexual offenders in the community (Heberton & Thomas, 1996, pp.428-429; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). As a result of the increased attention to sexual offences and offenders, often triggered by events such as the News of the World campaign outlined earlier, we have witnessed in recent history the adoption of numerous “get tough” sexual offender laws that are exceptionally repressive in comparison with other crime policies and often at odds with desistance literature (Jenkins, 1998, p.200; Williams, 2015, p.28). Whilst invariably evidence is available supporting each side of the argument, there is now an emerging suggestion which argues that punitive sexual offender laws are ineffective and may actually contribute to recidivism (Zevitz & Farakas, 2000, p.194; McAlinden, 2010, p.386; McAlinden, 2016, p.132). Even so, the research up to this point suggests that the public overwhelmingly support these

policies (Zevitz & Farakas, 2000, p.194). The intense hostility toward those convicted of sexual offences constitutes a significant impediment to efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate them (McAlinden, 2010, p.386) and this intense hostility is no more explicit than in the world of paedophile hunters.

The American approach to community notification is highly problematic and has received widespread criticism because of public protection concerns and unintended consequences (Socia, Dum, & Rydberg, 2017, pp.23-25; ten Bensel & Sample, 2017, pp.509-510). Rolled out in England, Wales and Scotland in 2010, the UK version of the public notification of information relating to known perpetrators of sexual harm is the Child Sexual Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS, Kemshall et al., 2010), colloquially named ‘Sarah’s Law’. This method instead enabled members of the public to make an inquiry to the police about a named person who was in contact with or had access to a child or children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. According to Home Office guidance on the scheme, anyone can make an application about a person who has some form of contact with a child or children. This could include any third party such as a grandparent, neighbour or friend. This is to ensure any safeguarding concerns are thoroughly investigated. A third party making an application would not necessarily receive disclosure as a more appropriate person to receive disclosure may be a parent, guardian or carer. In the event that the subject has previous convictions for sexual offences against children, poses a risk of causing harm to the child concerned where disclosure is necessary to protect the child, there is a presumption that this information will be disclosed. Under the CSO Disclosure Scheme, disclosure will only be made to a parent, carer or guardian but outside of the process, disclosure may be made to others. In any event disclosure may not always be to the original applicant (Home Office, 2018). In the years since the scheme’s introduction in England and Wales, data indicates that take-up has been low, with figures from 2015/16 showing that there were 1,252 applications resulting in 192 disclosures, from across

21 police forces in England and Wales (McCartan, Hoggett & O'Sullivan, 2016). Consideration should be given to whether the reportedly low number of requests can be explained by an increase of availability of information elsewhere, significantly online and via paedophile hunting activity.

The Child Sexual Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS, Kemshall et al., 2010) is evidence of how security through knowledge and risk management processes characterizes our response to the problem of the release of sexual offenders back into the community (McAlinden, 2016, p.132). The availability of detailed knowledge about offenders becomes the major concern, and with the development of community notification, the wider public can be said to become knowledge empowered consumers. However, as has been outlined here, risk management in this context is itself paradoxical in that the process is underpinned by research that contradicts its effectiveness (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996 p.430). Registry for sexual offenders both in the United Kingdom and the United States is promoted as a crime prevention measure, to involve the public in an informal network of neighbourhood surveillance (Zevitz & Farakas, 2000, p.195). The concept being that convicted sexual offenders would be more closely monitored and knowing this would serve as a deterrent to their reoffending. Demonstrations by criminal justice and penal practice such as registration and multi-agency working are not just threats aimed at offenders, they are also positive symbols which help produce subjectivities, forms of authority and social relations. Notification speaks of a system that will address the threat by allowing parents to advise children to avoid certain individuals, by facilitating community monitoring of released sexual offenders, and by deterring future crimes by such offenders by increasing the likelihood of apprehension (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996 p.430; McAlinden, 2016, p.132). From supervision, to registration, to community notification, the anonymity afforded to repeat offenders in the impersonal environment of large, increasingly transient modern communities is becoming more and more regulated.

The salient point here is that much research has shown that the expansion and heightening of the intention of control ultimately ends up producing the opposite (McAlinden, 2005, pp.375-376). If ageing, stable employment, marriage, abstinence from substances, lack of stress, and good mental health, have all been found to have a protective effect on criminal behaviour, surely, they should be promoted and protected where possible? Moreover, if those who desist hold patterns of cognition that include the ability to evaluate one's behaviour and the importance of establishing meaningful intimate relationships, are these not the things that should be prioritised in regard to managing the risk of recidivism (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.25; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198)? This gives credence to the ongoing debate about paedophile hunters and their actions having an unintended consequence of possibly increasing risk of harm and recidivism. Issues arising when notification is executed by paedophile hunters may include management accountability which is currently unclear. Structures are also variable and public accountability is absent (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.731).

The potential threat to individual rights is substantial, but particularly significant is the extension of such procedures to un-convicted persons. Nonetheless, the promise of prevention is an exceptionally powerful rhetoric (Hill & Wall, 2015). Paedophile hunters create a seemingly value neutral construction of public protection and prevention of dangerous offenders harming others, which mask serious implications for individual rights (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). It is true that the process of paedophile hunting is self-justificatory and difficult to challenge without appearing to side with a highly unpopular group of people (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). But the risk management regulations associated with statutory public protection partnerships raises a number of questions in relation to the lack of accountability and regulation

of paedophile hunters. Does the increase in prevalence of these groups therefore indicate a public desire for achieving effective systems of accountability under conditions of a more enhanced risk penalty? (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.249-250).

Patterns of offending behaviour, primarily facilitated by the increase of access to the Internet, and more specifically, social media, may benefit from these multi-lateral policing arrangements as they are able to respond to new types of offences (Campbell, 2016, p.345; Jewkes & Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Clearly, technological advances can overwhelm traditional policing crime control capacities until the threat exceeds capacity. But perhaps more concerningly, they can also generate new opportunities for the involvement of vigilant and concerned citizens who are encouraged to play a role in the provision of security online (Campbell, 2016, p.350; Jewkes & Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90; Hadjimatheou et al., 2019, p.10). There is a tangible difference though, between encouraging the general public to act preventively by installing protective software, or to promote the reporting of suspicious on or offline behaviour, or even to harness the power of crowdsourcing to assist police investigative work (Trottier, 2017, p.54). It is quite another to encourage proactive citizen involvement in the policing of online sexual offending. Is this increasingly, the objective of paedophile hunters?

Summary

This review of literature has been concerned with the actions of paedophile hunters. It has summarised existing knowledge regarding paedophile hunters, with particular focus on the definitions, developments and possible motivations. Additionally, it has provided an exploration of theoretical explanations for these behaviours and the conflicting dichotomies concerning the actions of paedophile hunting groups have been highlighted.

Owing to the lack of research data in this area, it remains largely uncertain whether paedophile hunters are supported by the public and professionals working within the criminal justice system. By exploring the existing literature, evidence has been presented to suggest that naming and shaming, specifically via the means of paedophile hunters, is ineffective in reducing re-offending and risk (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996 p.430; Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.36; Trottier, 2017, p.28). And yet, despite the research-based evidence, the current literature seems to suggest that there is a public desire for increasingly punitive approaches to dealing with sexual offenders, leading to and then sustained by, the presence of paedophile hunters (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238).

Both in the UK and internationally, research containing data regarding paedophile hunting activity, motivations and objectives and the public's standpoint on them, is limited. Despite the existing literature regarding paedophile hunters concluding 'a broader definition of vigilance should call upon a wide range of actors that enact specific types of watching where, members are called upon to watch out for child abusers, child abusers are called upon to watch their own behaviour, and both groups are called upon to watch and de/legitimize these vigilante groups' existence' (Trottier, 2017, p.28). Plainly what is required, in order to formulate a clearer understanding of the presence of paedophile hunters and the impact of the activity, is further research concerned with empirical data relating not only to public opinion on the matter, but also practitioners' perspectives, to provide greater insight into the impact of paedophile hunters upon risk management of sexual offenders by the police and probation service.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The origins of this research are based within professional experiences of being involved in scenarios where risk management plans were jeopardised in some way, due to the activities of paedophile hunting groups. During the time registered as a professional doctorate student, I have been intrigued to witness the responses and attitudes to paedophile hunting activity, as well as witnessing an evolution and development by the groups themselves. There is an absence of academic literature that addresses paedophile hunting activity, particularly in the context of risk management. It most often appears briefly in articles concerned with online activism via social media or the like. The varied discourse around paedophile hunting activity in what literature is available, has contributed significantly to the enthusiasm to undertake this research.

This chapter will begin with a brief exploration of social science research design and methods. From there, it will provide an analysis of mixing methods, with particular focus on how this has been undertaken in this research design. An outline of ethical considerations will then be provided, followed by an evaluation of data analysis. Then, an overview of the limitations of the research and a critical analysis of my role as an insider researcher will be presented. Finally, there will be a reflection on the process of developing and undertaking the research, including suggested improvements, should this methodology be repeated.

Social Science Research Design and Methods

Research methodology used in social science for much of the 20th century was largely quantitative and originated in the natural sciences (Tuli, 2010, p.105). Predominantly, researchers were concerned with investigating things which could be observed and measured, such observations and measurements were made objectively and repeated by other researchers.

In recent decades some researchers within the social sciences, particularly criminology, have expressed dissatisfaction with the quantitative methodology as a means of conducting research and generating knowledge (Tuli, 2010, p.105). These researchers have argued that the aim of research practice should be to understand the meaning that events have for the individual being studied and they have begun to explore alternative ways of conducting research in social science (Tuli, 2010, p.105; Johnson & Durberley, 2000, pp.3-4). In doing so, qualitative methodologies were developed in an attempt to increase understanding of why things are the way they are, and why people act the ways they do (Tuli, 2010, p.105; Johnson & Durberley, 2000, pp.3-4). As a result of this epistemological debate, purists for each position have emerged on both sides. Underpinning this debate are positivist and interpretivist paradigms of epistemology and ontology. Despite many proposed differences between quantitative and qualitative epistemologies, ultimately, the heart of the quantitative-qualitative debate is philosophical, not methodological (Krauss, 2005, pp.758-770). Philosophical assumptions or a theoretical paradigm about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding the overall perspective from which the study is designed and carried out (Krauss, 2005, pp.758-770). A theoretical paradigm is the identification of the underlying basis that is used to construct a scientific investigation (Krauss, 2005, pp.758-770). A paradigm can be defined as the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation, they are beliefs which scientists in a particular discipline hold to influence what should be studied and how research should be done (Bryman, 2016, p.635; Krauss, 2005, pp.758-770). Disciplines in which no paradigm has emerged as dominant, such as the social sciences, are deemed pre-paradigmatic in that they feature competing paradigms (Bryman, 2016, p.635; Krauss, 2005, pp.758-770).

In simple terms, epistemology is what, or what should be, regarded as valid knowledge and how we can obtain it. The position affirms the importance of imitating the natural sciences and

is therefore invariably associated with a positivist epistemological position (Bryman, 2016, p.24). Ontology is what constitutes reality and how we can understand existence (Tuli, 2010, p.105; Johnson & Durberley, 2000, pp.3-4). Ontology explores the social world, in particular how we organise and label concepts and facts (Tuli, 2010, p.105). Ontology examines facts with the intention of increasing understanding and perception by creating 'ontological categories' and these are used to frame our understanding of the social world. The position of positivism which underpins ontology is closely associated with quantitative research. Positivism believes that 'social facts' are a product of the environment and this is what defines nature. The approach does not support the notion that facts are influenced by society's own perceptions and understanding (May, 2011, p.9). However, Bryman (2008, p.159) has argued that positivism has failed to consider how people view and interpret the world and that this varies between individuals. There is a limited explanation for the differences that exist between reality and the experiment setting, therefore the approach offers no explanation of the meaning of the data. If the elements of positivism are disregarded, post-positivism is considered by some to be the only suitable approach. It is argued that this view recognises that background knowledge and values can have an impact on understanding (Bryman; 2016, p.24; Robson, 2011, p.22).

Quantitative research is grounded in gaining knowledge about a subject through the collection of data (Moore, 2006, p.115). It is a method that seeks to measure social problems by using statistical techniques which can be replicated in future research. The findings can then be generalised to look at theories of the wider population (Moore, 2006, p.115; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009, p.140). The approach has positivist groundings and considers that you can only test what is visible, such as numerical data. It seeks to test out new ideas before conducting numerous experiments and creating facts to examine (Bryman, 2008, p.13).

Quantitative purists express assumptions that are consistent with positivist philosophy (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15). That is, quantitative purists believe that social observations should be treated as objects in much the same way that natural scientists treat physical phenomena. Further, the observer is separate from the entities that are subject to observation. Quantitative purists maintain that social science inquiry should be objective. Meaning that time and context-free generalizations are desirable and possible, and real causes of social scientific outcomes can be determined reliably and validly (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15). According to this school of thought, educational researchers should eliminate their biases, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study, and test or empirically justify their stated hypotheses (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009, p.139).

The quantitative approach has been considered to be a central part of research within the social sciences. However, the approach was criticised in the 1960's, when it was argued that emphasis on the data itself means that the results have little or no wider meaning (Freshwater, 2007, p.144). In doing so, it has been said that quantitative research methods fail to take into account the differences between the natural and social world (Noakes & Wincup, 2004, p.6). Furthermore, Bryman (2008, p.159) states that positivism fails to consider how people view and interpret the world and that this can be different for individuals. A further criticism of the quantitative/positivist approach to social research has been that measuring data using quantitative methods can produce results that could be seen as synthetic yet the data is assumed to be both high in ecological validity and generalisable (Bryman, 2008, p.159; Noakes & Wincup, 2004, p.6). Assuming, as this approach does, that respondents interpret standardised questions the same way, it fails to account for potential differences in individual interpretations of the questions asked. For this research therefore, it was evident that a purely quantitative approach was not going to be suitable for obtaining new knowledge of a more subjective nature

from professionals. Therefore, my philosophical standpoint could not rely wholly on a quantitative, or positivist, approach.

Qualitative purists (also called constructivists and interpretivists) reject what they call positivism. They argue for the superiority of constructivism, idealism, relativism, humanism, hermeneutics, and postmodernism (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.139). These purists believe that multiple-constructed realities thrive, and that time and context free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible. Furthermore, they state that research is value-bound, and it is impossible to differentiate fully between causes and effects. Lastly, they state that logic flows from specific to general, and that knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.139). Qualitative purists are also characterized by a dislike of a detached and passive style of writing. Instead preferring detailed, rich and thick description, written directly and informally. Social science has always sought to supplement and develop knowledge, but there are difficulties in that the element of presupposed knowledge cannot be avoided (Johnson & Durberley, 2000, pp.3-4).

Epistemology concerns the development of knowledge and theory (Tuli, 2010, p.105), it has been regarded as progress and it is the aim of this primary research to add to the existing knowledge base (Johnson & Durberley, 2000, pp.3-4; Tuli, 2010, p.105). Paedophile hunting is a relatively recent phenomenon and so there is little research that directly examines paedophile hunter groups. What there has been is evidence of the activity having an impact on the policing of those convicted of sexual offences in the community, and public concern regarding convicted sexual offenders. Therefore, the theoretical framework within which my research is set is public notification, and more specifically what impact paedophile hunting has

on community-based risk management. The previous chapter outlined the extent of the problem of naming and shaming and that overly punitive responses to sexual offenders, such as those seen in some paedophile hunting activity, can be counterproductive in both reducing risk and recidivism. So, the philosophical standpoint of this research has helped to develop understanding of how paedophile hunting activity effects these issues, and where paedophile hunters are within the 'plethora of policing actors.'

Mixed Methods Design

The term mixed methods is used as a simple shorthand for research that combines qualitative and quantitative research within one design (Bryman, 2016, p.635). Both sets of purists view their paradigms as the ideal for research, and, implicitly if not explicitly, they advocate the incompatibility thesis (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.139). Suggesting that qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, including their associated methods, cannot and should not be mixed (Bryman, 2016, p.635). The quantitative versus qualitative debate is said to have been so divisive that some students are left with the impression that they have to pledge allegiance to one research school of thought or the other (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.139). Fortunately, having had the benefit of a highly competent and confident supervisory team, I was able to develop a mixed methods approach which matched my philosophical standpoint much more suitably than utilising a standalone qualitative or a quantitative approach would have done.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods have grown out of, and still represent, different paradigms. However, the fact that the approaches have been described as incommensurate does not mean that multiple methods cannot be combined in a single study if it is done for complementary purposes (Sale et al., 2002, p.52; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15). Each

method studies different phenomena and the distinction of phenomena in mixed-methods research is crucial (Sale et al., 2002, p.52). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004, p.15) defined mixed methods research as ‘an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm’. In doing so, the mixed methods approach recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research, but also offers an influential third paradigm choice that has been said to provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results (Sale et al., 2002, p.52; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15). The mixed methods approach was developed as a result of dissatisfaction amongst social scientists, with the limiting and insular individual approaches. By using mixed methods, the researcher is able to produce a more holistic approach towards the research issue. The use of mixed methods is not a new idea and follows Denzin’s concept of data and methodological triangulation. By using more than one method within research the weaknesses of each of the methods can be compensated (Denzin, 1978, p.303). Within this research design, the mixed methods approach was used to ensure that the issue was viewed as objectively as possible. Quantitative research has been said to be more of a macro level method, meaning it generally traces the outcomes of interactions over a large population (Mason, 2006, pp.12-13). Whilst qualitative research tends to focus on the issues at a micro level, meaning the research population is usually an individual or a small group of individuals in a particular social context (Mason, 2006, pp.12-13).

According to Bryman (2016, p.635) the argument against mixing methods is based upon two points. First, the idea that research methods carry epistemological commitments and are naturally rooted in epistemological and ontological commitments. Second, the idea that qualitative and quantitative research are separate paradigms in which epistemological assumptions, values, and methods are intertwined and are incompatible between paradigms

(Bryman, 2016, pp.636-637). This research design has taken a technical vision, meaning that greater importance has been afforded to the strengths of the data collection and data analysis techniques utilised, with qualitative and quantitative research being seen as compatible and indeed desirable for the research design (Bryman, 2016, pp.636-637). The embedded design used in this research is outlined below in Figure 3.1. It can have either quantitative or qualitative research as the priority, but it draws on the other approach within the context of the study. This design allows for collection of data to be sequential or simultaneous (Bryman, 2016, pp.636-637).

Figure 3.1 Mixed Methods Design



(Bryman, 2016, p.639)

In this research design, the epistemological position is mixed, with both qualitative and quantitative elements. The ontological position is constructivist and data collection was sequential. Sequential data collection was undertaken because it was practicable to design, launch and collect responses to an online survey, faster than it was to arrange and undertake interviews with busy practitioners. The embedded design has been particularly favourable because a purely qualitative or quantitative research design would have been insufficient in understanding the phenomena of paedophile hunting activity (Bryman, 2016, pp.636-637). Unlike the data collection, data analysis was simultaneous and intended to develop new knowledge that emerges from, and is therefore connected to, the reality the theory is developed

to explain (Bryman, 2016, pp.636-637; Mason, 2006, pp.12-13). The constant comparative method was used to achieve this, and this allows connections to be made with broader contextual issues and in my research. I used this method to generate the hypotheses based on both qualitative and quantitative data, that I then tested using correlation analysis in SPSS. The key thing about the constant comparative approach is making links to broader contextual issues. In this research, this has been comparing practitioner and public opinions within the theoretical framework of public notification. Utilising mixed methods in this research has allowed the phenomena to be examined in new ways, making it conducive to theory emergence and development (Mason, 2006, pp.12-13).

As outlined above, whilst data collection was sequential for convenience, data analysis was undertaken simultaneously. However, due to the large amount of data gathered, it has been decided that explanations of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis and the subsequent results will be presented in separate chapters. Henceforth, references to design and results are presented with the qualitative data first, and quantitative data thereafter for no other reason than continuity. The results will be linked to the broader theoretical framework throughout, but synthesis of both sets of results will follow in chapters six and seven.

Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange wherein one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person, the participant, by asking questions (Longhurst, 2003, p.143). Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews are conversational in that they offer participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important. In this research design, semi-structured interviews are defined as those having predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the

interview's perception of what seems most appropriate. They were selected because question wording can be changed, and explanations given. Furthermore, questions which may have seemed inappropriate with one participant may be omitted, whilst others can be included where desired (Robson, 2002, p.270). Semi-structured interviews are widely used in flexible qualitative designs, as such they were well suited to this research design (Robson, 2002, p.271). Turner (2010, p.755) outlines that there are three qualitative investigational perspectives that can be utilised to obtain rich data when undertaking interviews. These are informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach and standardized open-ended interview.

The *informal conversational interview* relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction. With the informal conversational approach, the researcher does not ask any specific types of questions, but rather relies on the interaction with the participants to guide the interview process (Turner, 2010, p.755). Some consider this interview type beneficial because of the lack of structure, allowing flexibility in the interview. However, others feel this type of interview is unreliable because of the inconsistency in the interview questions, making it difficult to code data during data analysis (Turner, 2010, p.755).

The *general interview guide* approach is more structured, but remains flexible (Turner, 2010, p.756). The way that questions are worded may depend upon the researcher conducting the interview. Therefore, one of the obvious issues with this type of interview is the lack of consistency in the way research questions are posed, because researchers can change the way they present them. Respondents may not consistently answer question(s) based on how it was posed by the interviewer (Turner, 2010, p.756).

Finally, the *standardized open-ended interview* is highly structured in terms of the wording of questions. Participants are always asked identical questions, but the questions are worded to

elicit open ended responses (Turner, 2010, p.756). This allows the respondent to contribute as much information as they desire, and it also allows the researcher to ask further questions as a means of follow-up. It has been suggested that standardized open-ended interviews are the most popular form of interviewing in primary research because of the nature of the open-ended questions. This allows respondents to fully express their viewpoints and experiences, eliciting richer and more in-depth information. One weakness with open-ended interviewing, however, is the difficulty with coding the amount of data generated. It can therefore be quite difficult to extract themes from the interview transcripts. Although the data provided by participants is rich and thick, it can be a more cumbersome process for the researcher to sift through the narrative responses in order to fully and accurately reflect an overall perspective of all interview responses (Turner, 2010, p.756).

In this research design, the *general interview guide* approach was selected because of its flexibility and adaptability. It was used to formulate the semi-structured questions that were pre-prepared but adapted and modified at times, depending on the respondent's answers. The issue of questions being asked differently was mitigated by there being only one researcher conducting interviews. The advantage of these semi-structured qualitative interviews was that replicability was not a consideration and instead this design was chosen for its ability to elicit thick, rich data. The full interview schedule can be found in appendix 1.

Mason (2010, p.5) outlines that samples for qualitative studies are much smaller than those used in quantitative studies. As the qualitative study goes on, more data does not necessarily lead to more information. In this research design, frequencies are not important. One occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as several, in understanding the topic. This is because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalised hypothesis (Mason, 2010, p.10). Finally, because qualitative research is time intensive, analysing a large

sample can be time consuming and impractical (Mason, 2010, p.10). The nature of this topic means that participants may have lengthy and diverse opinions (Mason, 2010, p.12). Samples must therefore be large enough to ensure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered. However, if the sample is too large data becomes repetitive, and eventually surplus to requirement (Mason, 2010, p.12).

Not all research designs are developed to generalise to a population of people (Sale et al., 2002, p.52; Thompson, 1999, p.68). As is the case in the qualitative element of this research design, which has been utilised to gain a rich and deep description to inform understanding of concepts and to contribute to broader theoretical understanding (Thompson, 1999, p.69). Therefore, the purpose of sampling in qualitative research is not to establish a random or representative sample, but rather it is intended to identify specific groups of people who possess characteristics relevant to the social phenomenon being studied. Participants in this research design were therefore identified because they would enable exploration of paedophile hunting activity from practitioner's perspectives, which is what was relevant to the research (Thompson, 1999, p.68).

Thompson (1999, p.70) outlines that qualitative researchers often use non-probability sampling techniques as it is advantageous to interview people who possess the knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. This has been the case here, with participants having relevant knowledge of the phenomenon being studied, if not first-hand experience. Therefore, questions of sample size are not as important, rather, it is the quality of the sample that should be noted. This research has generated new description that encompasses a range of experiences and values. It has also made explicit the limitations of the research, in relation to conventional generalisability. Thus, questions of sample should not be indicative of the success or value of

this research. However, in order to provide transparency regarding sampling for semi-structured interviews, it is important to pose the following questions.

Is the sample that is being studied, similar to the wider population? In qualitative terms, the similarity of participants enables a judgement to be made, regarding whether the experiences being explored would be meaningful to practice. In this research design it has been the case that the samples studied, police and probation, are similar to the wider population.

Was the sample selected in such a way that it could introduce bias into the research? This is as applicable to qualitative research as it is to quantitative and is accepted as one of the main limitations of this study. It is accepted that the sample of practitioners interviewed is not representative, and indeed captures only a limited view of practitioners from one part of the country. However, owing to the lack of primary research available in this area, it is also the case that as an initial, exploratory piece of research, this is a strong beginning.

Was the sample large enough? In qualitative research, this means – were there enough people (or enough time spent with a few people) to provide rich meaningful description and convincing analysis? It is accepted that some of the earlier interviews conducted are shorter in length than the latter. Reflections on the reasons for this are provided later in the chapter but this is acknowledged and accepted as a limitation of this study.

In September 2018, I approached Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) via the Ethics and Research Committee with a request to undertake 15 semi-structured interviews with probation officers. In October 2018, I was granted permission to undertake those interviews. Simultaneously, I contacted Hampshire Constabulary to ask for permission to speak with 15 offender managers (of any rank) and was also swiftly granted permission to do so. Once permission had been granted by the relevant agencies, I approached the University of

Portsmouth's Ethics Research Committee on 3rd December 2018 and was granted permission to begin collecting data on 18th December 2018. Both police and probation officers were approached via e-mail from their line manager, requesting volunteers to participate in interviews. As many of the participants were close colleagues, they were aware of research already, and were kindly very enthusiastic about giving up their time to complete interviews. Due to geography, some interviews were conducted over the telephone, but primarily interviews others were conducted face to face.

For the semi-structured interview sample, I had the benefit of my professional links to gain access to participants and availability sampling was therefore utilised. At the time of the research application, I was based in a field office in the South West South Central (SWSC) region and had the kind endorsement of senior managers there regarding conducting research. Before I had begun data collection, I relocated to the London area. Nevertheless, the senior management team in the SWSC region were kind enough to allow me to return to complete interviews with probation staff there. Sampling for police interviews was allocated to the senior officer in the teams that I had been granted access to. Those officers approached their teams for volunteers and passed the details of those willing to participate onto me.

Online Survey

Survey data collection is an important data collection tool (Vehovar & Manfreda, 2008, p.1). Online survey data collection was used in this research design because it is highly effective in gaining an insight into public perceptions on a large scale relatively quickly. In this design, online survey research is defined as the use of a website to collect real time data and store it in a form suitable for statistical analysis (Lefever et al., 2007, pp.580-581; Vehovar & Manfreda, 2008, p.1). There were several important decisions made in designing the online survey. The

first relates to The Community Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders (CATSO; Church et al., 2008; Harper & Hogue, 2015, p.253) scale. The CATSO is an 18-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure respondents' attitudes toward sexual offenders (Harper & Hogue, 2015, p.253). Scores range from 18 to 108, with high scores indicating negative attitudes (Church et al., 2008; Harper & Hogue, 2015, p.253). The CATSO was developed as an alternative to existing scales that had either not been validated adequately, used a predominantly qualitative design or been based on measures designed to examine attitudes toward other offender groups (Church et al., 2008; Harper & Hogue, 2015, p.253). The CATSO was used as the basis to formulate the twenty-question public perception questionnaire, which was administered using twelve of the original eighteen items, with eight additional items added. The new items intended to evaluate respondents' views about the risks posed by sexual offenders, and their views about paedophile hunting groups.

The second decision relating to the online survey design relates to the Likert scale. The Likert scale is a psychometric scale that has multiple categories, from which participants choose to indicate their attitudes or opinions about a particular issue (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014, p.4). Likert-scales are most frequently used to measure psychological constructs, one aspect of a person's cognition that can be measured (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014, p.5). Regardless of the type of construct being measured, the starting point for questionnaire development is to arrive at an understanding of the construct, primarily by reading academic literature on the topic. In this research design, the preliminary reading was focused on understanding the theory associated with the construct of paedophile hunting activity. A secondary reading focused on analysing previous research measuring public perceptions of paedophile hunting activity, of which there is very little available. Therefore, in addition to reading, it was useful here to engage in critical discussion of the content with my supervisor, who is also familiar with the construct. This strategy of combining the academic reading with critical discussions has resulted in a more

well-developed and accurate understanding of the construct of paedophile hunting activity, and therefore engendered more effective measures in the development of this research design.

The online survey questions used a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Many Likert scales have a 5-point scale with two positive responses, two negatives, and a neutral, or undecided. However, this can present problems as it gives participants an “easy out,” and often the neutral option is selected when participants do not know the answer, or do not want to put thought into the question (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014, p.6). I therefore decided that a 6-point scale (shown below in Figure 3.2) would be better for this research as it gently forces choice. A full outline of the online survey questions can be found in appendix 2.

Figure 3.2 Six-Point Likert Scale



Figure 3.2 displays the Likert-scale selected and there are a number of benefits to this scale type. Firstly, the scale moves from less agreement with the item (1. strongly disagree) to a stronger agreement (6. strongly agree). In doing so, the scale mimics the best form of measurement available, the ratio scale that exists with physical measurement systems such as the metric system. As all physical measurement scales run from smaller to larger amounts of the construct, it is argued that this is also the approach that should be taken with psychological measurement (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014, p.6).

A second benefit of this scale is that it has no neutral or middle category. Neutral categories can be detrimental to research value because middle categories cause statistical problems.

Analyses of rating scales often show that neutral categories disrupt measurement in that they do not fit statistical models well or are disordered. For example, Neutral is designed to be more difficult to endorse than Disagree, but statistical analyses of rating scales using software packages sometimes show that it is easier to endorse. I felt that a neutral category was unnecessary and only wanted to include questions that respondents could answer (Krosnick, 2018, p.440). Overall advantages of Likert-scale questionnaires are that firstly, the data can be gathered quickly from large numbers of respondents. Secondly the validity of the interpretations made from the data they provide can be established through a variety of means. Finally, the data they provide can be compared, contrasted, and combined with qualitative data-gathering techniques, such as semi-structured interviews as has been done in this research design (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014, p.4).

The third and final critical element of the survey design was separating the questions into two distinct categories. Survey items should flow coherently, which usually requires items on related topics to be grouped together (Krosnick, 2018, p.440). Coherent grouping can assist respondents' by specifying the meaning of a question more clearly. The decision about how to order items was informed by the survey aims and therefore in this design, two groupings were selected: attitudes towards sexual offenders and attitudes towards paedophile hunting activity. Where possible, the question context was modelled on the context in which any inference would be made. The survey was designed to go some way to fulfilling a key element of this research design - *is paedophile hunting activity supported by the public?* As such, the question context remained relevant to this research design throughout, with the only exception being the short demographic survey that preceded the main survey (Krosnick, 2018, p.440).

The online questionnaire design presents issues of representative sampling, response rates and the generalizability of the findings (Lefever et al., 2007, p.581). Online data collection means

that there is the potential of accessing a large and geographically distributed population (Bryman, 2004, p.481). As the sample is much greater and more diverse, responses are more generalisable to wider public opinion and attitudes. In addition to this, there are other benefits including flexibility, speed and timeliness, convenience, ease of data entry and analysis and question diversity (Bryman, 2004, p.481). One of the main considerations when using online surveys as a data collection tool is achieving good participation and response rates, particularly (as in this case) where no incentive is offered for participation. For academic research, the appeal for participation should be made as nonthreatening as possible (Lefever et al., 2007, p.581; Bryman, 2004, p.481). To achieve this, the theoretical and practical importance of the research and its relevance was made clear to participants by way of an introduction page at the start of the survey. Finally, to maximise completion rates, it is important to design the research tool in a way that is appealing. To achieve this, I kept the format of the questionnaire as simple as possible and kept the length of the survey to a minimum. Thus, making the survey easier to complete and yielding fewer incomplete responses.

In contrast, due to questions about sample selection (representativeness) and implementation, some online sampling methods are frowned upon by research scientists (Bryman, 2004, p.481). Selection methods such as blanket e-mailing and “volunteer” samples have been heavily criticized because it often resembles spam when messages are sent to huge numbers of potential respondents in an unsolicited manner (Bryman, 2004, p.481; Robson, 2002, p.236). With “volunteer” samples, people visit web sites and proactively sign up to participate in surveys which is likely to have implications on the characteristics of the respondent pool. Furthermore, concerns have been raised over respondents’ lack of online experience or expertise. Although the internet population is becoming more representative, there may still be discrepancies due to the lack of familiarity of possible respondents with internet protocols (Bryman, 2004, p.481;

Robson, 2002, p.236). Other concerns that have been highlighted with this data collection technique include the impersonal nature of it, privacy and security issues, perception as junk mail and skewed attributes of internet population. Despite their limitations, online surveys provide researchers with unique opportunities for collecting large amounts of data through the Internet (Bryman, 2004, p.481; Robson, 2002, p.236).

According to McInroy (2016, p.83), to encourage effective recruitment of participants to online survey research, an operational definition of the intended population and sample for each study should be developed (McInroy, 2016, p.83). As the purpose of this research was to understand public perceptions, the intended population was vast and varied, and it was hoped respondents would be from a multitude of backgrounds and circumstances. Participation in the online survey was invited by e-mail and social media appeal. I began by sending a request to friends, family and acquaintances to complete the online survey, with an additional request for them to pass it on to their own friends, family and acquaintances, to also invite participation. An estimate of how many people the initial approach reached would be somewhere between 50 and 100. Considering the online survey yielded 426 responses, the 'snowball' nature of the sampling has been effective. The demographic of respondents is explored in more depth later, but the limitations of sampling in this manner should be noted. The impersonal nature of the approach, privacy and security issues, perception as junk mail and skewed attributes of internet population must all be acknowledged as limitations to this sampling method (Bryman, 2004, p.481; Robson, 2002, p.236). In order to assess the quality of the sample utilised, the following questions have been addressed.

Is the population studied, similar to the wider population? In quantitative terms, this enables a judgement to be made regarding whether the results of the research can be applied to the wider

population. The population for the quantitative data may not be generalisable to the wider population, but it provides an important starting point for further research.

Was the sample selected in such a way that it could introduce bias into the research? This is as applicable to quantitative research as it is to qualitative and is accepted as one of the main limitations of this research. The recruitment strategy for obtaining participants is accepted to have limited how varied the participants' backgrounds are likely to have been. However, owing to the lack of primary research available in this area, it is also the case that as an initial, exploratory piece of research, this is a strong beginning.

Was the sample large enough? In quantitative research, this means was it large enough to detect a difference between groups if a difference existed? Whilst the sample size in this research design was better than expected in terms of the number of respondents, there remain issues with the recruitment of participants which has an impact upon wider generalisability.

McInroy (2016, p.90) recommends several steps to enhance the sample size of the online survey. These include selecting platforms strategically. For this research, online platforms where recruitment was undertaken were selected for their relevance and popularity. Social media is highly relevant to this research, owing to the presence of paedophile hunting activity within that domain. Therefore, social media was utilised as a platform for recruitment advertisement. In order to reduce biases, particularly in terms of being inclusive of people in an age range that may not be predisposed to social media use, recruitment advertisement was undertaken across other online platforms. E-mail was selected as an alternative online platform to initiate a further snowball sample. Additionally, in order to create a level of trust between participants and researcher, a website was maintained. By utilising Online Survey, it was possible to maintain an online platform where information could be provided about the study and researcher, to interested individuals (McInroy, 2016, p.91). The website was useful in

encouraging recruitment and allowing participants (and academic supervisors) to track the research process. Finally, in order to maximise response rates, issues that promote participant attrition were addressed in the early stages of survey design. Excessive qualitative questions were avoided, as was an exceptionally long survey with complex questions. It was also paramount to ensure that the online survey was compatible with mobile devices. Taking these steps has undoubtedly helped to yield the strong response rate (McInroy, 2016, p.91).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for data collection was sought in line with the University of Portsmouth's ethics procedure. I applied for ethical approval via the Ethics Research Committee on 3rd December 2018 and was granted permission to begin collecting data on 18th December 2018. Confirmation of favourable ethical approval can be seen in appendix 6.

There were important ethical considerations in undertaking the qualitative interviews. My professional role as a probation officer within the NPS required careful consideration in the research design. It was hoped that the seeking volunteers via availability sampling would ensure only those who were willing to discuss their experiences would participate. But using a gatekeeper helped mitigate participants feeling pressured. The gatekeepers were senior probation officers and detective inspectors respectively. Once again, anonymity, confidentiality and data security were guaranteed. All participants were provided with an information sheet ahead of the interviews taking place, explaining that participation was voluntary, that they would remain entirely anonymous and that they were able to withdraw from participation at any time prior to the 1st October 2019, when the data would be submitted for analysis. Participants were also asked to indicate that they provided their consent and signed an informed consent document confirming their willingness to participate.

The scope and expectations of the research were emphasised to participants to manage expectations about what influence the research may, or may not, have. Barriers to participation were minimised by interviews being carried out at times and locations convenient to participants. Permission was sought for the use of a digital recorder in each interview and participants were reminded of the element of anonymity with express attention being drawn to my inability to anonymise any information that could expressly identify them. In these cases, participants were encouraged to omit that information in order to negate any risk of reputational damage.

Reputational damage was the final, but equally important, ethical consideration. Whilst the intention was not to cause any reputational damage, it was important to consider that in expressing their views and opinions, practitioners may express views that oppose those of their respective organisations. In order to mitigate this risk, it was agreed that prior to dissemination of research findings (above and beyond that of the completed thesis), permission would be sought from the organisations prior to publication.

There were similar ethical considerations in developing the online survey. All participants were presented with the information sheet, explaining that participation was entirely voluntary, they would remain anonymous and they were able to withdraw from participation by not completing the survey and informed consent was asked for. The information sheet clearly explained that by completing the survey, participants were proving their consent.

Secondary victimisation was considered as potentially occurring in two forms. Initially, a participant may have experienced some form of sexual violence themselves, and therefore experience distress at being asked particular questions. This was addressed by ensuring relevant

support services were signposted. Secondly, a participant who had been targeted by paedophile hunters may have come across the survey and similarly, experience feelings of secondary victimisation. Again, relevant support services, as well as the right to withdraw (not complete the survey) were both emphasised.

Strengths

Qualitative interviews are an excellent way to gather detailed information that can be explored in much more depth than almost any other method allows. Participants in the semi-structured interviews conducted for this research were given the opportunity to elaborate in a way that is not possible with other methods. Perhaps more importantly, practitioners have been able to share insights in their own words and from their own perspectives rather than being asked to fit those perspectives into more limited response options provided by the researcher (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.139).

As outlined earlier, qualitative purists are characterized by preferring detailed, rich, and thick description, written directly and informally. As such, qualitative interviews have been particularly useful in this research design because the aim is to study social processes of paedophile hunting phenomena (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.139). One aspect of qualitative interviewing which has not been utilised here is observations, beyond those that the participants were orally reporting. Participants' body language, and non-verbal communication was not considered as part of this research but may be considered beneficial in future research methodologies.

Quantitative research is grounded in gaining knowledge about a subject through the collection of data (Moore, 2006, p.115). It is a method that seeks to measure social problems by using

statistical techniques which can be used in future research, where the findings can then be generalised to look at theories of the wider population (Moore, 2006, p.115; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, p.140). This was an important factor in the research design, to try and mitigate the criticism relating to me being an insider researcher. The quantitative element of this research has positivist groundings, meaning that you can only test what is visible, but it has also sought to test new ideas before conducting further research in this area (Bryman, 2008, p.13).

Online survey data collection is highly effective in gaining an insight into public perceptions on a large scale relatively quickly. In this research, the online survey used a website to collect real time data and store it in a form suitable for statistical analysis (Lefever et al., 2007, pp.580-581). Online data collection has allowed access to a large and geographically distributed population (Bryman, 2004, p.481). Although this does not equate to a representative sample, it does mean that responses are more generalizable of wider public opinion and attitudes as the sample is much greater.

Limitations

Unfortunately, these benefits do not come without limitations. The qualitative interviews relied on participants' ability to accurately and honestly recall details about their profession and personal views. A more accurate way of finding out what people actually do in practice, and perhaps think, could be to conduct observations and this could be a consideration in future research designs. Furthermore, qualitative interviewing is time consuming and expensive. Creating the interview schedule, identifying the sample and conducting interviews was just the beginning. Transcribing interviews was labour intensive, as was data analysis. Fortunately, I had access to a transcription service, but this is also costly. I was not offering any form of

financial incentive because in my view it would have been inappropriate to do so. Studies that do offer financial incentives or gestures of thanks for participating, will incur these costs.

The qualitative interviews undertaken varied significantly in length, with the shortest lasting 10 minutes and the longest being 55 minutes. In part, this was a result of the varying degrees of experience held by practitioners, but I also believe this to be evidence of my own growth and development as a researcher. After having completed a number of interviews, I began to grow in confidence in terms of asking follow-up questions or prompting further reflection and discussion from participants. Therefore, I accept that if this research was replicated by an advanced researcher, the quality of the research could be improved.

Some believe that face-to-face interviews are superior to telephone interviews (Bryman, 2004, p.326; Oltmann, 2016, p.1). This may stem from a legitimate concern that lack of visual cues could lead to data loss or distortion (Bryman, 2004, p.326; Oltmann, 2016, p.1). However, if these losses occurred here, there would be no impact on analysis and interpretation. These elements are not relevant to the data being analysed and therefore would not harm the quality of research findings. Other research has shown there is little evidence that data loss or distortion occurs, or that interpretation or quality of findings is compromised when interview data is collected by telephone (Oltmann, 2016, p.1). Some of the literature indicates that telephone interviews may allow respondents to disclose sensitive information more freely (Oltmann, 2016, p.1).

The professionals interviewed for this research are from a very narrow geographical area, which does not allow for this research to be generalised across other police and probation areas. However, this research was designed to contribute primary research addressing practitioner

attitudes and opinions of paedophile hunting activity. Therefore, it is considered a strength, rather than a limitation, that it has contributed to a limited pool of primary research and in doing so, been able to identify where further research would be beneficial (as outlined in chapter 6).

The main critique of qualitative research, as outlined by Bryman (2004, p.284) is that qualitative research is too subjective. Secondly, qualitative research can be difficult to replicate because it is unstructured and largely formulated based on the researcher's originality. Replication of any qualitative research is very difficult, and it is likely that it can never be truly replicated (Bryman, 2004, p.284). Unsurprisingly then, the criticism is that there are problems of generalisation and reliability. The lack of standardisation raises concern about reliability and implies that the scope of the findings of the qualitative research are limited (Robson, 2002, p.272). However, the purpose of this research has been to gather rich and in-depth information, not to attempt to generalise findings more widely (Bryman, 2004, p.284).

The online survey also relied on participants' ability to accurately and honestly divulge details of their personal views. Again, observations could have been undertaken for this purpose, and this could be a consideration for a future research design. Respondents' possible lack of online experience or expertise must also be acknowledged. Whilst it is well documented that the internet population is becoming more experienced (Mellon & Prosser, 2017, p.24), there may still be difficulties with the lack of familiarity of respondents using the online survey (Bryman, 2004, p.481; Robson, 2002, p.236). The quantitative research approach was criticised in the 1960's, when it was argued that emphasis on the data itself means that the results have little or no wider meaning (Freshwater, 2007, p.144). It could be argued then, that the online survey

utilised here fails to take into account the differences between the natural and social world (Noakes & Wincup, 2004, p.6).

The final limitation is the problem regarding sample selection for the online survey. The lack of representativeness of the sample should be accepted as one of the most fundamental limitations of this research. Online sampling methods have been heavily criticized amongst other researchers because sample selection via blanket e-mailing and volunteer samples often resembles a limited pool of respondents, not necessarily representative of the wider population and therefore preventing generalisation of the findings (Bryman, 2004, p.481; Robson, 2002, p.236).

Insider Researcher

My final thesis, and indeed the entire research design undertaken, have no resemblance to the design I started with at the outset of my professional doctorate journey. I had initially hoped that my research would be an exploratory piece, based on the attitudes and experiences of probation practitioners and service users of the impact of Transforming Rehabilitation. I had intended to do several in-depth, qualitative interviews with participants, and explore the themes that developed from these, hoping to gain insight into lived experiences of TR. In order to do so, I had to apply to HMPPS – formerly the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), for permission to collect data. I was granted favourable ethical approval by the university in April 2018, with the understanding I would not begin collecting data until such time as HMPPS had granted me permission to do so. By the end of May, having submitted my initial research application almost four weeks earlier, the HMPPS Research Application Committee reviewed my application to undertake research, and invited me to discuss it with the Head of my Local Delivery Unit, and her equivalent for the Performance and Quality strand.

In this discussion, I was advised that in order to be granted approval, I would need to amend my application slightly. I was advised that HMPPS would be extremely cautious of any discussion around anything ‘highly political’ such as TR. I was encouraged to consider a human resource change management piece, designed to advise HMPPS on how they may adopt and apply models of change to the organisation to ensure the organisational change is best managed. At this point, it became clear to me that my original application would be declined in its current form. I made a compromise, albeit unwillingly, and resubmitted the application in June 2018. I was averse to the compromise, not because I had a desire to be particularly dogmatic, but because I felt like I was being persuaded to submit something that was not my intended work, to ensure access to data would be granted. I felt very much as though I was being given a choice – do as we say and get approval, or don’t and you won’t get approval. It felt unfair, pointless and made me seriously question the validity of any research that was published with the agreement of HMPPS.

In response, I amended my participant pool slightly, and decided I would speak to ex-practitioners to glean some insight into their own experiences of TR. I wanted to understand whether they felt TR had had any bearing on their decision to leave the service. I conducted three interviews, all of which were interesting in their own right, but I was totally unenthused by the direction the research was being forced to take. It was at this point that I seriously began to question why I was doing this research. Where was I going with it? Was I even remotely interested in it? And most importantly, what was the point of it?

I had simultaneously resubmitted my amended research application, and in late September 2018, HMPPS agreed I could conduct an initial, exploratory piece of research. This had the condition that I must report the findings back to them fully, before conducting a larger scale

piece of research or publishing anything. They had also set so many boundaries, outside of which I could not stray, that the research was unrecognisable from my updated proposal. At this point, not only was I facing the prospect of completing a piece of research which I had very little interest in, but it was clear that there would be an on-going battle with HMPPS about what data I would be able to use, and what I would not. I therefore decided, with the full support of my supervisor, that I would deviate from my initial research proposal, and begin developing an entirely new research piece. Subsequently, I have developed a piece of research which critically, I have been extremely interested in, but also that was not be solely reliant on the National Probation Service (HMPPS) for data collection. The research that has been conducted makes me an 'insider' researcher (Fleming, 2018, p.311) which is an important consideration with regards to the methodology selected and the subsequent data analysis.

The concept of insider research is often contrasted with research undertaken by an 'outsider' who is not employed by the organisation within which the research is being conducted (Fleming, 2018, p.311). Independent and objective existence of truth can be seen as a definition and meaning of positivism. Regarded as a research strategy that is based on the ontological principle that truth and reality is free and independent of the viewer and observer, (Aliyu et al, 2014, p.81) research conducted by an outsider was once considered to be the only form of objective research (Chavez, 2008, p.474; Hellowell, 2006, p.484). It is not uncommon for insider research studies to be criticized for not conforming to the same standards of accuracy because of the researcher's personal position being too close for objectivity (Fleming, 2018, p.311). However, both outsiders and insiders have to contend with methodological issues of identity and the situated knowledge they possess as a result of their position. And so, it has also been argued that the insider / outsider distinction is a false dichotomy (Chavez, 2008, p.474).

An insider researcher, I was investigating parts of the organisation known to me, not collecting data from strangers (Fleming, 2018, p.313). The boundaries between researcher and practitioner could be said to be blurred, by aspects of my professional identity, which is aligned and shared with some of the participants (Chavez, 2008, p.475). However, my position as an insider has not been static. In some senses, I have moved along the insider researcher continuum during the course of the research, owing to my role within the organisation changing whilst I was undertaking the primary research (Chavez, 2008, p.475; Fleming, 2018, p.313). Historically, insider research was most commonly undertaken in ethnographic studies in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (Chavez, 2008, p.475; Fleming, 2018, p.313). However, it is clear that a range of methodologies can be used for conducting insider research, and these include, but are not limited to, case studies, action research and ethnography. The insider position of the researcher will often determine the research design, the type of data collected and the way the data is analysed (Fleming, 2018, p.313). The development of the methodology used in this research was undoubtedly formulated and influenced by my position as an insider researcher.

Invariably, there are divided opinions as to what extent an insider researcher impacts on, or alters, the research process (Fleming, 2018, p.315). Arguably, the key advantage of being an insider researcher, is the pre-existing knowledge that I was able to bring to the design of the study (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p.69). As an insider researcher, I have knowledge of the complexities of paedophile hunting activity, especially associated with community-based risk management. I have been able to develop the research based on my own understandings of the issues needing investigation, such insights are not as easy to uncover by an outsider researcher (Fleming, 2018, p.313; Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p.71). However, as an insider, it was important that I was aware of the potential for researcher bias, whereby my personal values

and experiences may have influenced the research questions, design and data collection procedures (Chavez, 2008, p.475; Fleming, 2018, p.313). I have managed to largely mitigate this issue by implementing external controls from the National Research Committee for the NPS, the research committee for Hampshire Constabulary and the University of Portsmouth Ethics Committee.

One of the initial challenges of conducting insider research is to ensure that the research design has rigour and transparency in the methods of data collection (Fleming, 2018, p.313). As an insider researcher, it is important to minimize any likely criticism about being biased. One such criticism is the inherent subjectivity associated with the researcher being positioned within the organisation and having knowledge about the organisation which could be perceived to be contaminating (Chavez, 2008, p.475; Fleming, 2018, p.313). Part of the data collection undertaken here has been qualitative interviews with employees of the organisation I was working for. Despite oversight from holistic agencies such as the NPS research committee, the University Ethics Committee and Hampshire Constabulary, it was important that I was aware of the potential for informant bias (Cooke, Johnstone & Gadon, 2008, p.66). What views participants share in an interview, may be influenced by how the researcher is perceived and their relationships with the researcher outside of the research context (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Participants may be willing and comfortable to share detailed or personal information and to discuss issues with someone who they perceive understands them. The converse can also occur, where the participant may not share information for fear of being judged, or because of the impact on their ongoing relationships (Chavez, 2008; Mercer, 2007).

Fleming (2018, p.320) suggests that within insider research, credibility can replace internal validity, dependability can replace reliability, and transferability can replace external validity.

Insider research designs can provide opportunities to address issues of credibility as the researcher, through their direct involvement in the organisation, is more likely to have built a rapport with the participants over time. They may also have a deeper understanding of contextual factors and influences (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Cooke, Johnstone & Gadon, 2008, p.66; Fleming, 2018, p.320). Dependability refers to establishing that the process of the research has been logical, traceable and documented (Patton, 1990, p.294). To enhance dependability, it is critical that researchers fully acknowledge and describe their own position as an insider researcher situated within the context of the study. Transferability is the ability to apply the findings to a different context and this is enhanced through the researcher presenting detailed, descriptive data, in such a way that others reading the results can understand and draw their own interpretations (Patton, 1990, p.375). While credibility, dependability, and transferability are important to consider for this research design, the same applies to qualitative research methodologies in general (Fleming, 2018, p.320; Patton, 1990, p.375).

Insider research has some key ethical issues that need to be considered, which are unique and do not necessarily apply when the researcher is an outsider (Fleming, 2018, p.320; Patton, 1990, p.375). Particularly relevant to this research is that within the NPS, I needed to maintain an awareness of the inherent risk where I was in a role of either formal or informal power (Fleming, 2018, p.320). It was key to address the perception of implicit coercion during recruitment. Although in this case, power relationships did not exist because data was not being collected from those who lacked professional power relative to me, as the researcher. In this research design, participants were of equal employment status (e.g. also qualified probation officers), or a non-comparable employment status (e.g. employed by an entirely different service) and therefore the issue of power imbalance was negated. But, in order to avoid any concerns around implicit coercion, perhaps through my colleagues feeling as though they

should participate even if they did not want to, I employed the role of a gatekeeper. Consequently, potential participants were approached via an NPS or police gatekeeper, who sought volunteers for participation. It is hoped that this 'opt in' rather than an 'opt out' approach avoided feelings of coerced participation.

Another ethical challenge for insider researchers relates to privacy and confidentiality (Cooke, Johnstone & Gadon, 2008, p.66), and this was the issue I felt most conscious of. Even if I did not specifically identify my own organisation, publication of the details of the research design would mean that it would be easy to make the connection to where the research was undertaken. Although the NPS is a national organisation, which in many ways mitigates this issue for the probation element of this research, I was conducting research with Hampshire Constabulary, which is a relatively small police force. As such, I was keen to ensure the impact on privacy and confidentiality was considered and mitigated in as many ways as possible. However, as in this case, not all insider research studies maintain institutional anonymity, as disclosing the organisation is relevant to the research approach and justified within the ethics approval process (see appendix 6) (Fleming, 2018, p.320; Patton, 1990, p.375). So, to ensure the individuals within these organisations had their identity protected, I explicitly outlined the option to change small details or characteristics to protect participant's identity (although it was not necessary to do so in the end). As such, despite the organisations having been named, I have been highly cautious in ensuring that demographics and descriptions of the context of the study do not reveal the identity of the participants (Fleming, 2018, p.320).

As an insider researcher, access to privileged information (some of which may be personal or incidental), that may not necessarily be available to an outsider is commonplace. Therefore, it is critical to ensure confidentiality is maintained and, unlike outsiders, insiders need to consider

whether it is ethical to use their inside knowledge for research purposes (Fleming, 2018, p.320). In research conducted by an outside researcher, once the research has been completed and published ethical concerns dissipate. However, with insider research, the researcher and participants may continue to work for the same organisation or remain members of the same group, and challenges can occur. The participants may have shared information about other members of the group or situations which may impact on future activities or relationships (Fleming, 2018, p.323; Patton, 1990, p.373).

Whilst these insider researcher issues can cause a predicament for the insider researcher, providing a rich description of the context helps transparency of methodology and transferability of the findings (Fleming, 2018, p.320; Patton, 1990, p.375). A primary advantage of being an insider researcher is that during the analysis and interpretation phase of the research process, I did not need to spend time getting to know the nuances of the context of the research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55). Due to familiarity with the language, jargon and acronyms used by the research participants, it is less likely that I would have misunderstood the participants' responses. An outsider researcher is potentially at risk of not noticing interesting data because of a lack of understanding of the specific context that the comments are related to. However, they also have the advantage of being able to perhaps more objectively identify patterns that may be missed by insider researchers, as a consequence of professional knowledge. There may be the risk of a premature conclusion being reached if the preconceptions of the research outcomes appear to be confirmed. Therefore, insider researchers need to ensure the data is rigorously interpreted to ensure credibility (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55; Fleming, 2018, p.323). Yet, there are sometimes criticisms that an insider researcher can be too familiar and take for granted the inferred patterns and regularities they expect are present in the data. Premature conclusions that are based upon preconceived ideas and the desire for

positive outcomes are not unique to insider research, but there is more potential for this to occur when the researcher is closely linked through their position (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55). To overcome this issue, in analysing and commenting on findings, my position as an insider researcher is made explicit. Furthermore, an acknowledgement of the insider researcher position, and how that may have influenced the research process has been provided in this chapter. It is noteworthy that external researchers or outsiders do not normally describe their own position. Nor how they have interacted with members of the organisation being researched. Typically, outsiders write their reports in the third person, but this does not mean the research conducted is objective. Indeed, the very assumptions accompanying the position of an outsider researcher make it difficult for personal bias and influence to be assessed by the reader (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55; Fleming, 2018, p.323).

In order to ensure ethical and trustworthy insider research was conducted, recognition of the risks, challenges and tensions that existed during the research process have been made explicit (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55; Fleming, 2018, p.323; Patton, 1990, p.373). The mixed methods design of this research has also helped to negate some of the issues that are experienced by insider researchers. Whilst collecting the qualitative data, I was very much an insider researcher, investigating parts of the organisation known to me professionally, as well as collecting data from colleagues who were known to me. As such, boundaries could be said to have been blurred by the positioning myself as an insider researcher, whose professional identity was aligned with (and in some cases shared) by participants (Chavez, 2008, p.475). However, my position shifted when undertaking the quantitative element of data collection. Whilst I had pre-existing knowledge of the subject matter, my position as an insider dissipated. It is accepted that I could never be, in research terms, truly an outsider. Therefore, the challenge

was to ensure that the research design had rigor and transparency in both of the methods of data collection (Fleming, 2018, p.313).

Summary

The research design presented in this chapter has developed from my own professional experiences and perceived gap in literature regarding paedophile hunting activity. This chapter began with a general exploration of social science research design and methods, focusing on the mixing methods approach which has been used in this research design. An exploration of the ethical considerations was then provided. Followed by an overview of the data analysis process, including the strengths and limitations. The chapter also provided a critical analysis of my role as an insider researcher.

Having had the benefit of access to willing participants who have kindly given up their time to contribute to this research, the journey from formulation of the initial research design, to the final design and data analysis has been a relatively smooth one. The issue of being an insider researcher has required consideration throughout my time enrolled on the professional doctorate course and has been addressed at various stages, including within applications for access to data and ethical approval. It does not appear to have adversely affected the research, and the advantage of having access to both public and professional opinions have been invaluable. What will be provided in the following chapters is the thought-provoking and at times surprising results of extensive data analysis.

Chapter 4: Practitioner Perspectives

Introduction

Qualitative and quantitative research methods have grown out of, and still represent, different paradigms, and the approaches have been described as incommensurate (Sale et al., 2002, p.52). However, this does not mean that multiple methods cannot be combined in a single study if it is done for complementary purposes. A mixed-methods approach has been utilised in this research because each method studies a different phenomenon (Sale et al., 2002, p.52). This chapter will begin by providing an overview of data analysis undertaken in the qualitative element of the mixed methods design. It will also examine the results from the thematic analysis, starting with an overview of coding and then outlining the results from the initial coding. From there it will explore the four themes identified as a result of the coding, providing in-depth insight into the data that has contributed to the development of these themes. It will conclude with a summary of the key findings from the qualitative data.

Data Analysis

Fourteen NPS probation officers, and fourteen Hampshire Constabulary police offender managers of various ranks were interviewed. To ensure anonymity of the participants, in a relatively small sample, no demographic information was collected. Twenty-eight semi-structured qualitative interviews lasting between 20-60 minutes, were completed. The difference in interview length was predominantly determined by the practitioners' experiences of managing cases where paedophile hunting activity was involved. Where participants had more experience, interviews tended to last longer. Some interviews with probation officers were conducted over the telephone, others face to face. This was decided based on participant preference, availability and stipulation (if any) by the research body for the organisation. All police interviews were conducted face to face. Whilst there was some deviation from the

question transcript, this was only in response to information provided by the respondent. Participants were selected initially by using availability sampling, whereby professional links were utilised. Gate keepers subsequently approached the participants who were selected within the remit of that permitted by the National Research Committee for NPS, Hampshire Constabulary and then the University of Portsmouth Ethics' Committee.

Qualitative interviewing is a flexible and powerful tool which can open up many new areas for research (Robson, 2002, p.272). I decided to use it because it enabled me to investigate research questions of immediate relevance, which would otherwise be difficult to investigate (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p.573). Semi-structured interviews offered the possibility of modifying the line of enquiry, which allowed me to follow up interesting responses. Early qualitative interview research was often based on the theoretical views of positivism and post positivism and during interviews, researchers often had predetermined hypotheses based on theory or prior research (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p.573). More recently however, a transition has occurred towards postmodern paradigms that emphasize constructivist - interpretivist perspectives (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p.573). As a result, researchers such as myself who are undertaking qualitative interviews, are often more directly involved with participants. By using semi-structured interviews that have generated rich and illuminating material, it has been possible to work collaboratively with participants to better understand paedophile hunting activity (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p.573; Robson, 2002, p.272).

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning or themes, across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847). TA was the primary analysis technique utilised to analyse qualitative data because TA allowed collective meanings and experiences to be

identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847). TA is a flexible method that allowed me to focus on the data in different ways. This included analysing meaning across the entire data set, so I was then able to report the obvious or semantic meanings in the data, whilst also interrogating the latent meanings, the assumptions and ideas that lie behind what is explicitly stated (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847).

As a novice researcher, TA also provided me with a way of doing research that otherwise could have seemed vague and overly complex. TA offered me an insight into qualitative research and taught the foundations of coding and analysing qualitative data systematically. I have been able to link these to broader theoretical issues that are again explored later in chapter 6. TA is a method of data analysis, not an approach to conducting qualitative research. I have seen this as a strength of TA because it ensures the accessibility and flexibility of the approach. In this instance, TA has offered a way of separating qualitative research from the broader debates, including sexual offending, public notification and risk management. The accessibility of TA as a method of analysis to a novice researcher has suited the mixed methods element of this research. It has helped in establishing a link to broader theoretical or conceptual issues which have been identified as part of the quantitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.850).

The process of TA was made up of six steps. Firstly, *familiarizing myself with the data*. This involved immersing myself in the data by reading and rereading the interview transcripts, listening again to the audio recordings and making additional notes, both by hand and using the NVivo computer software. Essentially, I have had to read data as data and therefore consider the words actively, critically and analytically (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77; Braun,

Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.849). The second stage has been to *generate initial codes*, which involved a systematic analysis of the data through coding it. Codes identify and provide a label for the feature of the data that is relevant to the research questions. Codes can provide a concise summary of a portion of data or describe the content of the data. To assist me in coding, I again utilised the NVivo data analysis software (see appendix 3, 4 & 5 for NVivo Outputs).

In the third stage of data analysis, I was *searching for themes*. In-depth analysis began to reveal the shift between codes and themes. A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.851). Searching for themes was an active process using TA, meaning themes were generated or constructed rather than being discovered. The data set provided the material base for analysis and therefore also limited the possible final outcome. However, many different variations could have been created when analysing the data, and still could, if utilised in future analysis. The next phase involved *reviewing the coded data* to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes. The basic process of generating themes and subthemes involved collapsing or clustering codes that seem to share some unifying feature, so that they reflect and describe a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data. (See appendix 2 for the thematic networks, from codes to themes). For this part of the TA process, a project map was created. This is shown below in Figure 4.1. The map presented here shows the beginnings of the final themes being developed, which is explored further in this chapter.

Figure 4.1 Project Map

Another important element of this stage was beginning to explore the relationship between themes, and to consider how the themes would work together in telling the overall story about the qualitative data. According to Braun & Clarke (2006, p.82; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.851), good themes are distinctive but can also stand alone, they need to work together as a whole. Therefore, it was during this stage that the transition between the initial and final themes began. Dismissing coded material and provisional themes that did not fit within the overall analysis was an important element of this phase. Whilst at times it felt counterproductive, dismissing elements of the data was important because the more themes there were, the more likely it was that the analysis could lose coherence.

Once the similarities in the themes were noted, the next phase of data analysis was reviewing the identified themes. To do this, the themes were reviewed in relation to the coded data and entire data set. This process was essentially about quality checking the data and potential

themes. According to Braun et. al (2019, p.847), this process is particularly important for novice researchers working with large data sets. As a novice researcher myself, the first step involved checking the themes against collated extracts of data. Key questions used in this phase were, is this a theme, could it just be a code? If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme, does it say something useful about the data? What are the boundaries of this theme, what does it include and exclude? Is there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme? Is the data too diverse and wide ranging, does the theme lack coherence?

During this part of the analysis, a number of potential themes were collapsed together to reveal a distinctive and coherent set of themes that work in relation to the coded data extracts. To ensure the quality of the data, I once again reviewed the themes in relation to the entire data set. This involved a final re-read of all the qualitative data to determine whether the themes meaningfully captured the entire data set. The result of this process was to develop a set of themes that captured the most important and relevant elements of the data. Any suggestion in this stage that there had been a disparity in the data themes was likely to be indicative of selective or inadequate coding. Therefore, I was mindful of this throughout this phase of data analysis. If this occurred, a simple revision, or creation of an additional themes took place. Final discarding of existing themes took place in this phase.

In the final stage of data analysis, a report on the findings is developed. The production of a report such as a journal article or a dissertation, it is not a phase that takes place at the end of analysis. Unlike in quantitative research, analysis of the data and report production does not happen chronologically. Writing and analysis were thoroughly intertwined, and I utilised a number of techniques from informal writing of notes on paper to writing memos using NVivo, and then moving to the more formal process of report writing. According to Braun et. al (2019,

p.847), the purpose of the report is to provide a compelling story about data, based on the analysis. This story is clear yet complex, and unlike the results of more traditional TA, is less able to be embedded in a scholarly field due to the lack of existing research (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847). However, the data allows parallels to be drawn with literature from other fields and identifies where further research would be beneficial. In this research design, TA has gone beyond description to make an argument. The themes identified connect logically and meaningfully and build on previous themes to tell a coherent story about the data (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847).

Common errors in TA include providing data extracts with little or no analysis. Using data collection questions as themes. Having weak or unconvincing analysis if themes are not coherent. Analysis can suffer from a lack of evidence, and TA can suffer because of mismatches between the data the analysis, or between the form of TA done, and the theoretical position of the report (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847). Being aware of common errors has aided my own analysis by allowing me to take a more mindful approach to it.

Coding Overview

Undertaking the thematic review of the data yielded interesting insights into attitudes and opinions of practitioners, which could not have been predicted prior to the research. The emergence of these results has allowed practitioner's perspectives regarding paedophile hunting activity to be understood. Initial analysis of transcriptions allowed early identification of a broad range of codes. There were fifteen codes identified and these are shown below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Initial Codes

Theme	Percentage
Attitudes of Offenders	1%
Police Attitudes To PH	12%
Probation Officer Attitudes to PH	9%
Professional Experience	5%
Public Perceptions	1%
Defining 'Paedophile Hunter'	4%
Economic Status	1%
Hunter Motivation	6%
PH as a Deterrent	1%
Prevalence of PH	4%
Social Media	7%
Specific Groups	6%
Quotes	4%
Risks Posed by PH Activity	12%
Managing Offenders Caught by PH	6%
Outing Sex Offenders	2%
Safeguarding Children	2%
Safeguarding Offenders	5%
Training	3%
Community Policing	2%
Other Agencies	1%
Professionalising PH	3%
Resources	1%
Senior Management	2%
Political References	0.01%

The process of coding was inclusive, thorough and systematic. The initial codes identified were a mix of descriptive and interpretative, but all were relevant to answering the research questions. A copy of the code book can be found in appendix 5. Through the process of analysis using TA, the initial fifteen codes were then collapsed into smaller themes, with the final four themes shown below in Table 4.2. The table also shows which of the codes were collapsed together to make up the theme.

Table 4.2 The Themes

Emergence & Prevalence	Resources	Safeguarding & Risk	Attitudes
Defining 'Paedophile Hunter'	Training	Risks Posed by PH Activity	Attitudes of Offenders
Economic Status	Community Policing	Managing Offenders Caught by PH	Police Attitudes To PH
Hunter Motivation	Other Agencies	Outing Sex Offenders	Probation Officer Attitudes to PH
PH as a Deterrent	Professionalising PH	Safeguarding Children	Professional Experience
Prevalence of PH	Resources	Safeguarding Offenders	Public Perceptions
Social Media	Senior Management		
Specific Groups	Political References		

Defining and naming the themes is the process of being able to clearly state what is unique and specific about each theme (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019, p.847). Using TA allowed me to develop the themes by having a singular focus, ensuring they were related but not overlapping, and directly addressing the research question. The word clouds shown below in Figure 4.2 demonstrate how analysis of the words used by practitioners has helped to develop each of the themes. The words, of five letters or more, are the most frequently used by both police and probation practitioners within the theme.

Figure 4.2 Themes Defined**Attitudes**

Contained within the theme of attitudes were any references to, or expressions of, views or opinions regarding paedophile hunting groups or their activity.

Resources

Contained within the theme of resources were any references to resources, including additional training or suggestions of the CJS working in a more official capacity with paedophile hunters.

Safeguarding**& Risk**

Contained within the theme of safeguarding and risk were any references to safeguarding, whether offenders or victims, and any mention of risk or risk related issues.

Emergence & Prevalence



Contained within the theme of emergence and prevalence were any references to the emergence, development, prevalence and changes to groups over time.

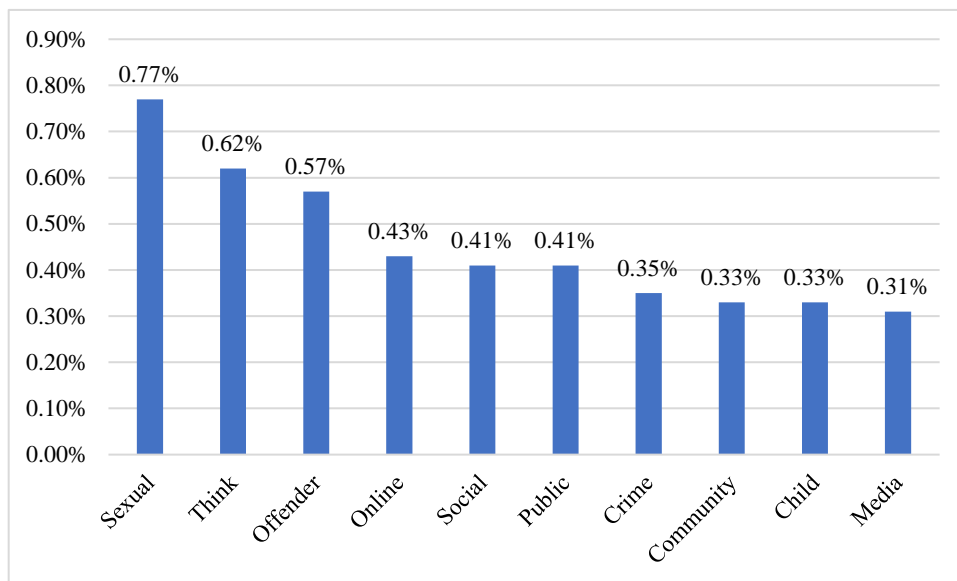
Development of the final themes provided me with a critical insight into how both similarities and differences in opinion were so prominent in practitioners understanding of, and attitudes towards, paedophile hunting activity. The themes are explored in greater depth below.

Emergence & Prevalence

This theme was made up of 7 codes, defining paedophile hunter, economic status, hunter motivation, paedophile hunting as a deterrent, prevalence of paedophile hunting, social media and specific groups.

“So yeah, I guess for me, a paedophile hunter is somebody who is – whether on their own or part of an organisation – going online to try and identify somebody who is trying to groom a child online in order to exploit them, I guess for sexual offending.” (Police, 2)

The most commonly occurring words (of 5 letters or more), coded into this theme from police and probation officer transcripts, are shown in the word cloud below.

Figure 4.4 Most Frequently Used Words – Defining Paedophile Hunters

It was interesting to observe that responses by police officers to this question varied in length and complexity, from lengthy and detailed explanations such as the one below.

“Paedophile hunter is a group, a non-police, non-regulated group of people, like-minded people who have decided sort of a vigilantism type thing that they are going to...they’re not satisfied with the police dealing with it, so they are going to hunt out paedophiles or people they suspect to be paedophiles by posing online, via text, via chat rooms as a younger male or female to entice someone in, and the ultimate aim is to either exchange images or to arrange a meet so that they can then apprehend the said person on the scene and contact police.” (Police, 3)

Too much shorter and more succinct explanations.

“My understanding is civilians who seek to identify and catch paedophiles by various methods, normally online.” (Police, 5)

A similar pattern emerged when I spoke with probation officers. When expressing their views regarding definitions of paedophile hunting groups, some were very descriptive.

“So the understanding that I have of what a paedophile hunter is, is a kind of, I would consider it as like a vigilante group. It’s a group of people who don’t have any kind of affiliation to things like police or anything like that. They are like members of the public who kind of group together or, you know, it might be just two of them, I have no idea, but they would kind of go online and act like young people under the age of 16 and go on social media or kind of internet chat rooms and kind of place themselves there. And

when someone starts talking to them, they would talk back as a child and see if the person kind of makes sexual references. And they would drop kind of hints to say that they were a child to that person so a, somewhat a law abiding adult would kind of pick up on the fact that they're a child, by mentioning like school or things like that to kind of... Yeah, essentially to trap sex offenders. And then either plan a meeting so that they could then meet them and then call the police, kind of, like a citizen's arrest almost." (Probation, 4)

And others were less so.

"Paedophile hunter, in my views, it tends to suggest someone who is entrapping, I suppose, those people who they believe to have committed a sexual offence against children." (Probation, 13)

In attempting to define paedophile hunters, the first and most prominent issue I wanted to understand was whether they are vigilantes. From a socio-political standpoint, vigilantism has primarily been considered as typically violent expressions of a collective group seeking to assert or to restore order through direct punishment, in defiance of existing legal frameworks (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23). Criminologists on the other hand have reasoned that some vigilante action can remain within the boundaries of the law and does not always involve punishment. They have therefore tended to address vigilantism as a structured and forceful reaction to criminal or social transgressions on the part of volunteer citizens, whose objective is to ensure the security of an established order (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23). In trying to understand how practitioners may define paedophile hunting groups, I found it useful to see results from the analysis which shows the most frequently used words by practitioners. Table 4.3 below shows the most commonly used words, coded into *defining paedophile hunting activity*, with the notable absence of the term vigilantism, in fact this term was weighted less than 0.20% and therefore not included in the most commonly used words. By considering the language used by practitioners in response to this question, I began to gain a better understanding of their attitudes, opinions and beliefs regarding paedophile hunting activity.

Table 4.3 Most Frequently Used Words – Defining Paedophile Hunters

Word	Weighted Percentage
Sexual	0.77%
Think	0.62%
Offender	0.57%
Online	0.43%
Social	0.41%
Public	0.41%
Crime	0.35%
Community	0.33%
Child	0.33%
Media	0.31%
Justice	0.29%
Research	0.28%
Children	0.26%
Groups	0.26%
Journal	0.25%
Offending	0.25%
Criminal	0.23%
Group	0.22%
Cases	0.22%
Study	0.21%

Whilst there was a surprising lack of reference to vigilantism, I observed that in trying to define paedophile hunting groups, practitioners commonly referred to existing groups that they were aware of or had previously been in contact with.

“In Southampton obviously we have Trap who are an interesting bunch.”
(Police, 1)

Specific paedophile hunting groups were mentioned five times in five separate probation officer interviews. And yet, in all fourteen police interviews specific groups were mentioned repeatedly.

“We’ve left a vacuum so why are we surprised when the likes of Stephen Jeer fill it.” (Police, 1)

In addition to personal motivations, social media was also mentioned frequently by practitioners, and therefore appeared in this theme. This appears to support the notion that the actions of paedophile hunters are now so prominent due to developments in accessibility to information. Carty (2015, p.6-7) explains that social movements, unlike other forms of collective behaviour is a sustained, collective articulation of resistance and the availability of technology aids how social movement actors organise campaigns (Loveluck, 2019, p.23-24). What makes paedophile hunters unique, is the moral and ethical dilemma surrounding them as it seems to add to the debate about the suitable punishment and effective risk assessment of sexual offenders (Hill & Wall, 2015).

“So, from that, I get it. And, then obviously having dealing with the offenders themselves, when they’re outed on Facebook particularly, or social media and have people from Shane Brannigan’s team knocking on the home address of the offender, yes, on this particular instance the family knew so that was okay.” (Police, 8)

Social media was an area that was discussed widely across all interviews, appearing in thirteen police interviews and eleven probation officer interviews. There was a very clear recurrence of one particular social media outlet, as shown in figure 4.5 below. Facebook was counted fifty-six times, meaning its weighted percentage was 3.43%. The next closest social media platform being mentioned was YouTube, which was counted seventeen times, thirty-nine times less, and therefore its weighted percentage was 1.15%.

Figure 4.5 Social Media Word Cloud

The issue of economic status was also raised by police officers, it was mentioned six times, in three separate police interviews.

“I think there’s a lot of, oh, my God, the white working class are uniting, oh, my God, panic, rough people in the street.” (Police, 1)

-

“In certain rougher council estates you may end up with large public order issues. And the other, I suppose, concern would be people who are incorrectly identified through their own methods.” (Police, 5)

-

“There is a bit that goes are they being fitted up. And generally speaking, hopefully I’m not saying something too outrageous here but your online offender is usually severely lacking in a lot of communication and social skills.” (Police, 10)

However, the issue of economic status was not referred to once during probation officer interviews. This could be explained by police having a more front facing role, in the sense that they are out in the community, and therefore more likely to observe this issue. Yet I found it interesting that probation practitioners, who have been said to often have a more in-depth

relationship with offenders (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.90; Nash, 2008, p.312), made no reference to economic status at all.

Resources

This theme was made up of 7 codes, training, community policing, other agencies, professionalising paedophile hunters, recourses, senior management and political references. The most commonly occurring words (of 5 letters or more), coded into this theme from police and probation officer transcripts, are shown in the word cloud below.

Figure 4.6 Resources Theme Word Cloud



This theme was particularly useful in addressing the question of whether it is likely that police will join forces with paedophile hunting groups to work together collaboratively in the future. Here the lack of decisiveness amongst practitioners on this issue was common. Online activity has been said to be self-perpetuating in that the more instances of paedophile hunters

‘successes’ that are documented, the more coverage these groups get, and the more members of the public are exposed to it (Loveluck, 2019, p.24). In recent years, media attention has been drawn to the activities of numerous paedophile hunting groups operating in the UK, with a particular interest in whether the activity will be supported by police, generating headlines such as ‘Police ‘may consider’ working with paedophile hunters’ (The Guardian, 2017). The suggestion of professionalising paedophile hunting groups was put to practitioners, and I asked questions about how they thought this might be achieved. All but two police officers made some reference to professionalising paedophile hunting groups, some seemingly in support of it.

“And you might get those people who have got real skills, you know, reason, sensibility, professionalism, who can bring that in and help us to do it because we would give that legitimacy and they’ll be, like, I’m willing to go and sit at home now and do a bit of this because I really give a shit about this because I’ve got kids and I want do something for my community. People want to be useful. They want to help, and this is something that everyone can get behind, everyone. And it would deter those offenders in our communities who just don’t have that message.” (Police, 1)

Others seemed to be more cautious and raised the interesting question of whether in professionalising these groups, the police would also have to make them accountable to the same laws and procedures as the professional practitioners currently undertaking the work.

“I’ve thought about it before, sadly, but I think if the police were to turn around and say we’re supportive of what you’re doing, please be a little bit more professional. I wonder whether they would fall subject to the same rules that we are in terms of RIPA and Investigation Power Act laws and whether the defence could argue that they’re working with the police/for the police and there’s just a complete breach of RIPA powers and they’re not adhering to the Regulation of Investigation Powers.” (Police, 5)

It was interesting to note that fewer probation officers, only three in total, made reference to professionalising paedophile hunting groups. When they did mention it, they appeared much less ambiguous and were clear that the work being undertaken by paedophile hunting groups, should be left to the police.

“Yes, so the police might be doing stuff in the background and then actually there might be a reason why they’re not going straight in to deal with somebody because they feel like it’s managed because they’re doing x, y and z. Then somebody might just completely go in there from these paedophile hunting groups and just expose them out or whatever and then that could, I guess, potentially be detrimental to some work that’s being done elsewhere. My gut feel is like the police are doing it in a roundabout way already and that actually that’s worked for a long time and it feels like the community trying to take it into their own hands.” (Probation, 11)

-

“No, I think you’ve got to have, if we’re saying hunter groups or trap groups or whatever, I just can’t see how...I think you’ve got to have professional people or it’s got to be a registered body in some form or another. I think there was the case, wasn’t there, with...who was that girl who was killed on the common?” (Probation, 13)

Police and paedophile hunters joining forces would move the police and public collaboration beyond its conventional, and relatively harmless responsibility of providing the police with additional eyes and ears. In so doing, it poses questions of where the boundaries of citizen involvement in policing might be drawn (Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson, & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Pertinent questions around the suitability or resilience of members of the public to carry out work of this kind was referred to on one interview.

“So, I guess that illustrates the differences in the paedophile hunter groups and their differences in mental resilience whereas a professional agency would say, sorry, Mike, you’re not up to doing that.” (Police, 13)

In the interviews, there were several references made to community policing. Whilst no probation officers mentioned this, which is perhaps not surprising, six separate police officers did. In one police interview, an interesting observation was made regarding community policing and other types of offending. The suggestion being that engaging communities with some types of offending was happening regularly, but that there were different exceptions when it comes to community policing and offences of a sexual nature.

“Rather than actually we’ve got a real commitment to neighbourhood policing and we should be massively pushing engagement with our communities around this. Why is it that we are so obsessed with engaging with communities on drugs, antisocial behaviour, all these other issues. We really [inaudible 14:37] we love neighbourhood policing, we love it, but with this it’s just taboo. And it’s, like, why, because it’s too messy, because we are worried about what we might find because we have low expectations of the people who are in these groups because they are working class white people.” (Police, 1)

I found this response particularly interesting as it seemed to juxtapose the July 2018 National Police Chief’s Council ‘Responding to Online Child Abuse Activists’ document. This document outlined the official response of UK police forces to the newly named Online Child Abuse Activist Groups (OCAGs). It acknowledged the growth of paedophile hunting activity across the country and inferred that the increase in police funding for online investigations was likely to reduce the need for such groups in the future. Perhaps the most interesting contrast with police interview 1, was the decision to ‘adopt a position that, based upon current experience, the overall operational impact of OCAG’s is not a positive one in the effort to tackle child abuse’ (NPCC, 2018).

Safeguarding & Risk

This theme was made up of 4 codes, risks posed by paedophile hunting activity, managing offenders caught by paedophile hunters, outing sex offenders, safeguarding children and safeguarding offenders. The most commonly occurring words (of 5 letters or more), coded into this theme from police and probation officer transcripts, are shown in the word cloud below.

Police officers in modern, post-enlightenment societies are an essential requirement for the maintenance of order. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is such a focus on risk (Paterson & Williams, 2019, p.14). However, I found it interesting that police officers spoke least frequently about the attitudes of offenders. This could be an indication of a more victim centred approach. But I was interested in whether the police considered a victim to be the target of paedophile hunters, or the pseudo-victim (the victim that the person targeted thought they were communicating with). Whilst coding for this theme, any references to criminal activity undertaken in the process of executing paedophile hunting activity was excluded because this was coded into *hunter motivation* within the emergence and prevalence theme.

If we accept that probation represents a profession with a profoundly moral purpose that works for the benefit of service users, but that also serves the public good insofar as improving rehabilitation and reducing recidivism (Kirton & Guillaume, 2019, p.942), then it is surprising that their responses were so commonly coded into *risk posed by paedophile hunting activity*. I would have expected there to be less of a focus on risk, and more of a focus on rehabilitation. What is misleading about this level of coding, is the ‘risk’ being referred to by police officers is significantly different than the ‘risk’ being referred to by probation officers. This became clearer as the data analysis became more in-depth. Police officers often spoke of the *risk posed by paedophile hunting activity* in terms of the risk to possible victims. Whereas probation officers spoke more commonly of the *risk posed by paedophile hunting activity* in regard to the risk posed to the individual being targeted by the paedophile hunting group.

“We are really good at managing risk but we’re very risk averse and we’re very cautious and it seems that the emphasis of our work too often has been on safeguarding the offenders, who actually are adults in the community can look after themselves a lot of the time.” (Police, 1)

The issue of safeguarding provided a stark difference in terms of cohesion and unity in both police and probation officers responses. This was the most prominent area in which I found differences in attitudes and opinions between practitioners. Whilst only five police officers did *not* mention child safeguarding, thirteen probation officers made no mention of child safeguarding at all.

“So, yeah, aware they are around, part of our role in MAPPA is general safeguarding and I tend to find if it's been a paedophile hunting group that have caught them there tends to be more safeguarding to do because things do get posted up, social media wise.” (Police, 7)

In contrast, nine police officers and nine probation officers spoke of safeguarding offenders. With good reason, since there is an ongoing debate about paedophile hunters and their actions having an unintended consequence of possibly increasing risk of harm and recidivism. Issues arising from public notification executed by paedophile hunters may include management accountability, which is currently unclear. Structures are also variable and public accountability is absent (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.731). But particularly significant is the impact of paedophile hunting activity on un-convicted persons. Paedophile hunters create a seemingly value neutral construction of public protection and prevention of dangerous offenders harming others, which mask serious implications for individual rights (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). It is true that the process of paedophile hunting is self-justificatory and difficult to challenge without appearing to side with a highly unpopular group of people (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). But the risk management regulations associated with statutory public protection partnerships raises a number of questions in relation to the lack of accountability and regulation of paedophile hunters. Does the increase in prevalence of these groups therefore indicate a public desire for achieving effective systems of accountability under conditions of a more enhanced risk penalty? (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, p.249-250).

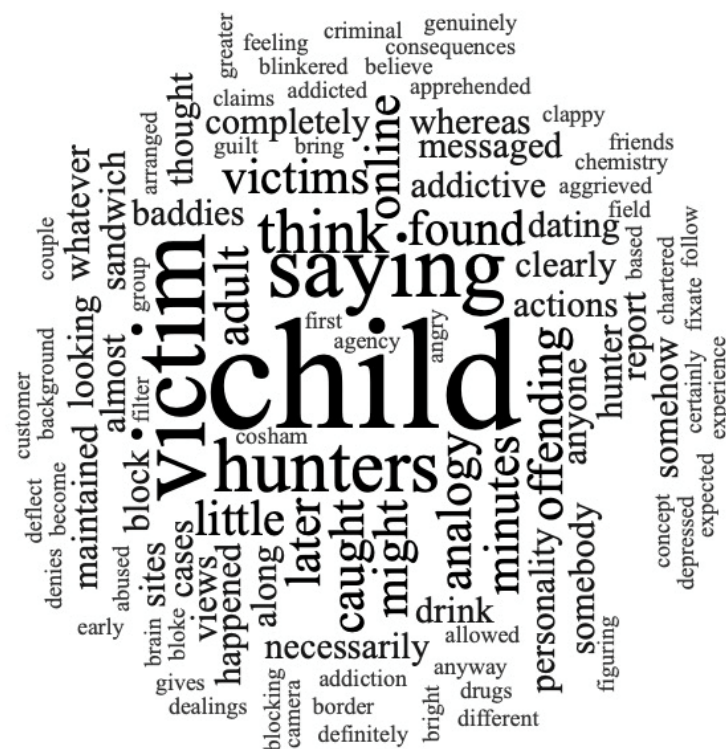
Attitudes

The theme of attitudes was made up 4 codes, attitudes of offenders, police attitudes to paedophile hunters, probation officer attitudes to paedophile hunters, professional experience and public perceptions.

“I think, it’s kind of like a heart and head situation. So my head’s saying, no it’s not useful, but my heart is going, yeah, but it feels like it is useful because how would that person have been highlighted otherwise?” (Probation, 4)

The most commonly occurring words (of 5 letters or more), coded into this theme from police and probation officer transcripts, are shown in the word cloud below.

Figure 4.8 Attitudes Theme Word Cloud



This theme was particularly useful in helping me to understand practitioner’s opinions of paedophile hunting activity. The word cloud shown above in Figure 4.8, very clearly puts

‘child’ at the centre of this. In recent times, relationships between the police and the probation service have changed dramatically (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.94). Partnership working has been encouraged by all the legislation mentioned in chapter 2 including, the Criminal Justice Act 2003; the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 (in particular Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements); the Sex Offenders Act 1997; and the Sexual Offences Act 2003. But close working relationships between the agencies has not always been easy, raising problems around information sharing, conflicting objectives, different ways of working, contrasting attitudes towards offenders and cultural tensions (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.87). Interestingly, none of the practitioners I spoke to identified issues with information sharing, different ways of working or cultural tensions with their respective police or probation colleagues.

Ideologically, probation and police officers are regarded as occupying contrasting positions in the criminal justice system (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.90; Nash, 2008, p.312). The police as ‘catch and convict’ crime fighters who apprehend criminals and whose overwhelming desire is to prevent and detect crime. On the other hand, ‘woolly’ probation officers whose work with the same people construct them as service users rather than criminals, and who provide supervision with the objective of resettlement and rehabilitation. With different philosophies, it might have been safe to assume, prior to conducting this research, that police and probation would come into conflict and develop distinctive occupational cultures based on contrasting views (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.91; Nash, 2008, p.311). The responses from practitioners did not support that notion and the word cloud in Figure 4.8 suggests that ‘victim’ and ‘child’ are very commonly the key concern of both sets of practitioners.

Legislation encouraging agencies to work more closely for crime prevention, community safety, risk management and public protection has emerged from various reviews including

(but not limited to) the Morgan Report (1991), which recommended a multi-agency approach to community safety; the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) which put partnership working on a statutory basis by creating responsible authorities, and the creation of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in 2017 (HMPPS, 2018; Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.89). These reports and the legislation drive towards closer working relationships and have both practical and conceptual consequences, some of which are reflected in the academic literature and by the results of this research (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.87). Some of the academic literature outlines that a consequence of collaborative working is that boundaries are blurred between agency roles (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p. 90; Nash, 2008, p.312).

Some of the responses I collected may also indicate support for the assertion that there has been a loss of distinct roles. Indicating a move towards the control of offenders based on their assessed risk, for the benefit of public protection. However, what is clear is that for both police and probation practitioners, the issue of the risk posed by paedophile hunting activity is of fundamental importance. This is demonstrated by it being overwhelmingly the issue that was discussed most.

“But the paedophile hunters don’t have to deal with risk management, all they want to do is identify the baddies, if that’s what they do brilliant, stop, full stop. Yeah, leave it there, then we’ll continue with the risk management, it’s when they start interfering with the risk management, that’s when it all goes wrong”. (Police, 8)

The similarities and differences in the attitudes of practitioners were interesting and sometimes surprising to note. Historical animosity between probation officers and the police has been well documented (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.87) and it has previously been reported that perceived cultural connections remain strong across the organisations (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.93). Academics have previously outlined that healthy relationships between probation and the police required a realignment (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.94). Perhaps the fact that none of

the practitioners that I spoke to identified issues with information sharing, ways of working or cultural tensions is evidence of that realignment having happened by consequence of the professionally unifying, if not community damaging, activity of paedophile hunting activity.

Figure 4.9 Police Interviews Word Cloud



The word clouds denoted in Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10 show the most frequently occurring words (of 6 letters or more), taken from the transcripts of police and probation officer interviews. The top three most frequently recurring words in both sets of transcripts were the same, and appeared in the same order: people, paedophile, police. This is reassuring in terms

for probation officers. Finally, the word *caught* appeared ninth by police officers and forty third by probation. So perhaps the realignment and unity has not happened after all.

Summary

This chapter has examined the qualitative research data. Using TA, fifteen codes were initially identified. These were then merged, creating the final four themes. The final four themes closely matched the themes emerging from the academic literature presented in chapter 2. When examined further, interesting questions began to develop around the suggestion that there may have been a loss of distinct roles, and a move towards the control of offenders for public protection. Through further analysis, this suggestion was dispelled by there being clear differences in the tone of the language used during interviews. Unity and agreement were observed when considering elements of practitioners' attitudes and opinions, compared to the formal guidance and response, issued by NPCC regarding paedophile hunting activity.

It is clear that there are similarities between the final four themes identified during primary research and the themes that emerge from the existing literature. Most notably, this relates to public notification, risk management and community lead (citizen lead) policing. If we consider, as shown in Table 4.4 below, the themes that have emerged from the data compared with the themes that have emerged from the literature, the similarities are obvious.

Table 4.4 The Themes and The Literature

Themes	Literature
Attitudes	Public Notification
Resources	Citizen Lead Policing
Safeguarding and Risk	Sexual Offending, Risk Management and Desistance
Emergence and Prevalence	Defining Paedophile Hunters

Unlike the academic literature, the interviews undertaken for this research have allowed practitioners to share their insights in their own words, and from their own perspectives. The qualitative interviews have therefore been an excellent way to gather the beginnings of detailed information, which can (and should) be explored in much more depth in future research. Further discussion and analysis of the results will follow in chapter 6, but the key findings from the qualitative research data are:

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data, closely matched the themes that emerged in the literature. Indicating that the existing literature is able to closely mirror attitudes of professionals and practitioners who have experience of working in some capacity with paedophile hunting activity.

Early data analysis suggested that both police and probation officers discussed the same themes in similar proportions once coded. Further in-depth analysis then revealed that the perspectives and attitudes within those broad themes were very different when comparing police with probation officers. The top three most frequently used words in both sets of transcripts were the same: people, paedophile, police. Whilst initially, this could have been an apparent indication of unity across professionals, the emphasis on rehabilitative language such as *person*

was more frequently observed in probation officer transcripts, with more punitive language such as *caught*, being more commonly used by police officers.

Police and probation officers appeared to be more supportive of the activity of paedophile hunting groups than the official guidance would lead us to believe. Some professionals (see Police 1 & 8 and Probation 4) even conjectured about how the police could work with paedophile hunting groups in similar ways to those already established within other aspects of community policing.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the data analysis that was undertaken in the quantitative element of the mixed methods design. It will also present the results from the quantitative data and conclude with a summary of key findings.

Chapter 5: Public Perceptions

Introduction

The preceding chapters outlined that qualitative and quantitative research methods have grown out of different paradigms and been described as incommensurate. However, in this research design, multiple methods were used, combined in a single study, for complementary purposes. This chapter will begin by providing an overview of the data analysis undertaken in the quantitative element of the mixed methods design. It will also examine the results from the quantitative data, beginning by outlining the demographic information, before presenting the synthesised descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The chapter will conclude with a summary of key findings from the quantitative data.

Data Analysis

426 members of the public completed the online survey. 407 (95.5%) of whom described their ethnicity as White, 97% (27.8%) specified their gender as male; 327 (76.8%) as female and 2 declined to provide gender or stated 'other'. The modal age of participants was thirty years, the standard deviation being 12.97 years. As previously explained, the sample was recruited online using email invitations and advertisement posts on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook). Detailed demographic information was collected prior to data collection. The demographic questions requested information about participants' gender, age, highest obtained qualification, income and previous experience working within the Criminal Justice System.

Participants were self-selecting by responding to the aforementioned online invitations. Some participants were also recruited by using the open forum online survey website Online Surveys. The survey opened on 3rd January 2019 and closed on 1st June 2019. When beginning the

survey, participants were provided with an introduction to the study and the task to be completed. If happy to proceed, participants were asked to provide informed consent before being taken to the first page of the survey. Once all the survey questions had been answered, participants were provided with a full overview of the study, thanked for their time and signposted to relevant support agencies for additional support if required.

Utilising an online survey provided flexibility for which alternative methods (interviewing) would not have been practicable. Having the invitation to participate in several formats, in addition to the speed and global reach of the internet, allowed real-time access for interactions with diverse respondent groups (Kannan et al., 1998, p.75). The method has proved efficient and timely, with all responses having been collected within a six-week period.

Online surveys such as this one are capable of including dichotomous questions and providing a scale for respondents to select their answer from, which ensures a more critical measure of public perception (Arkkelin, 2014, p.5). Utilising this method has provided ease of data entry and analysis. The result being that, not only was it simple for respondents to complete the online survey, but it was also simple for their responses to be tabulated and analysed. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is a software program that in its most basic application is designed to analyse scientific data related with the social science. SPSS stores and organizes the data provided and then compiles a data set to produce suitable outputs. With the help of the statistical information, researchers can begin to understand the phenomenon studied, and in some cases can change their research strategy accordingly (Arkkelin, 2014, p.5).

I decided to use SPSS (version 25.0) as the data analysis method because working on data is a complex and time-consuming process, especially for novice researchers such as myself. SPSS can store and operate large amounts of information, and with the help of some techniques makes

analysing the data simpler. As a hesitant quantitative researcher, I was particularly grateful for this. There are various tests within SPSS that are used to analyse data and produce a characteristic pattern between different data variables. Correlation was the test was used in this research design because correlation coefficients are indicators of the strength of the relationship between two different variables (Bryman, 2008, p.341). A correlation coefficient that is greater than zero indicates a positive relationship. A value that is less than zero signifies a negative relationship between variables (Bryman, 2008, p.341). A value of zero indicates no relationship between the variables that are being compared. The correlation coefficient is a measure that determines the degree to which the movement of different variables is associated. The most common correlation coefficient is generated by the Pearson's r , and may be used to measure the linear relationship between two variables relationship (Bryman, 2008, p.341).

The Pearson's r was selected in this design because it examines relationships between interval and ratio variables. The primary features of this method are that the coefficient will almost certainly lie between 0 (zero, or no relationship between variables) and 1 (a perfect relationship) and this indicates the strength of a relationship (Bryman, 2008, p.341). The closer the co-efficient is to 1, the stronger the relationship. The coefficient will either be positive or negative and this will indicate the direction of the relationship (Bryman, 2008, p.341). A correlation of -1.0 indicates a perfect negative correlation, and a correlation of 1.0 indicates a perfect positive correlation. When the correlation coefficient is greater than zero, a positive relationship is indicated. Conversely, when the value is less than zero, a negative relationship is indicated. A value of zero indicates that there is no relationship between the two variables relationship (Bryman, 2008, p.341). The results of this analysis are presented in the following way. The r -value indicates strength and direction (\pm) of the correlation and in this score, bigger is better. The p -value is the probability that you would see an r -value of this size just by chance

and in this score, smaller is better. Finally, 'N' relates to the number of pairs in sample, degrees of freedom (df) equals $n-2$. The results are reported in the following format, the [hypothesis] was supported/rejected, it does/does not correlate significantly with Test Score, $r(0) = -.00$, $p \leq .00$.

Demographics

The online survey consisted of three sections. The first was a short demographic survey. The remaining sections collected responses regarding public perceptions of sexual offenders and then paedophile hunters. Respondents were asked to score their answer to the main survey on a scale of 1-6 (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Probably Disagree, Probably Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree). As the questionnaire responses were divided into two main themes, analysis of the data will be presented in the same way here.

Demographic information allows better understanding of certain background characteristics within a participant group and can include age, race, ethnicity, income, employment information and marital status (Thompson, 1999, p.68). Demographic questions are any question(s) that aim to better understand the identity of a respondent. Demographic surveys seek basic information about respondents that allow the researcher to understand where each person fits in the general population. During data analysis, this enables splitting of larger groups into subgroups based on characteristics, for instance age (Thompson, 1999, p.68).

According to McInroy (2016, p.83), to encourage effective recruitment of participants to online survey research, an operational definition of the intended sample for each study should be developed (McInroy, 2016, p.83). The purpose of this research was to understand public perceptions, and so the intended population was vast and varied. It was hoped that respondents would be from a multitude of backgrounds and circumstances. The online survey yielded 426

responses. The ‘snowball’ nature of the sampling in this research was therefore effective. All 426 respondents provided an answer to the question *what is your gender*. The breakdown of these responses is shown in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Respondents Gender

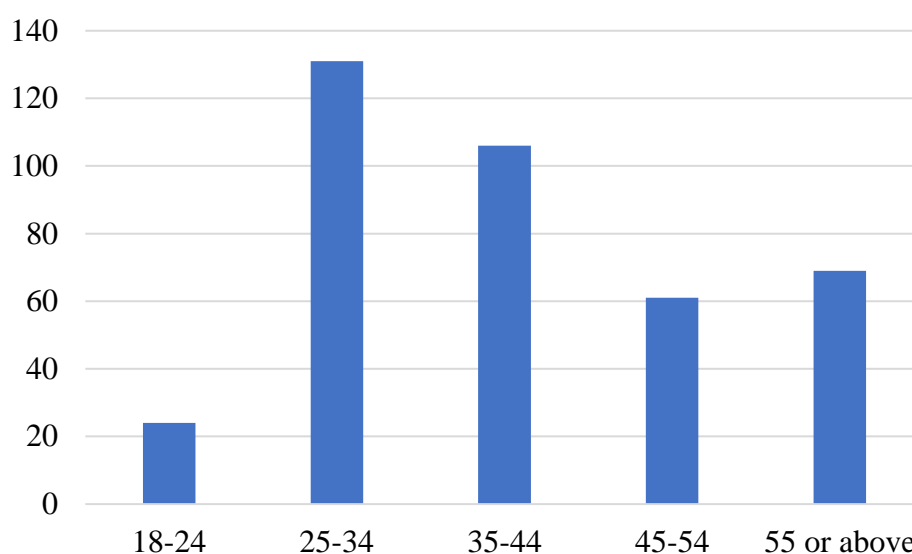
	Frequency	Percent
Female	327	76.8
Male	97	22.8
Other	2	0.5

Table 5.1 shows that of the 426 respondents, 327 (77%) were female and 97 (23%) were male. It is noteworthy that, whilst the sample of respondents to the public perception questionnaire may not be generalizable or representative, it is similar to the population of probation officers interviewed where the gender differences were weighted significantly (72% female and 28% male) towards female respondents. Conversely, the police officers interviewed was the same divide (72% male and 28% female) but weighted significantly towards male respondents.

The question of overrepresentation of white females in this research is an interesting one. It could of course, simply be reflective of my own network. However, it is also noteworthy that several studies have failed to find any gender difference in attitudes towards either the blaming of sexual offenders or the perceived efficacy of sexual offender treatment, rehabilitation or community notification programs (Rogers, Hirst & Davies, 2011, p.515). Therefore, it could be that more females engaged with this research to address the issue of paedophile hunting. An interesting study by Zhou & Qiu (2020, pp.1-19) recently concluded that Internet efficacy rather than conventional forms of political efficacy predicted the tendency toward online engagement, and this could be another explanation for the gender breakdown of respondents.

However, the same study showed that women with a strong sense of group identity internalize the collective goal of gender and carry a strong belief that the Internet can be used to achieve social change. Combined with the adequate technical skills, perhaps the fact that more females engaged with the research indicates online actions by this group, to achieve desirable social change (Zhou & Qiu, 2020, pp.1-19). 407 respondents provided an answer to the question *what is your ethnicity* and 95.5% described this as White. In a study by Whitaker et al (2017, p.290), it was found that using social media to recruit participants often resulted in better representation, and improved participant selection in young and hard to reach demographics. It also demonstrated however, as may have been the case in this research, that using social media to recruit participants results in an over representation of young, white women (Whitaker et al., 2017, p.290).

It was hoped that the sampling technique would ensure responses were received from a varied spread of ages. 393 people (92.3%) provided an answer to the question *what is your age*. The mean was 40.09 and standard deviation 12.97. Figure 5.1 below denotes respondents' ages.

Figure 5.1 Respondents Age

It was important to understand age breakdown for online survey respondents, as it helped me to contextualise the issues being explored. For instance, as was seen in the previous chapter, social media is often linked to paedophile hunting activity. The findings of a 2017 study by Mellon & Prosser (2017, p.2) found the mean age of Facebook users was 40, which was similar to the mean age (40.09) in this research. The mean age of Twitter users was slightly younger at 34, which compares to an overall population mean, in the study by Mellon & Prosser (2017, p.2), being 48. Their research also showed that the representativeness of each social network varied considerably by age. 85% of people aged between 18 and 30 used Facebook, but only 40% of respondents over 40 did. Consequently, Facebook users were closer to being representative of younger age groups. Twitter users were a minority in every age group. In terms of gender, the study found that Twitter users were slightly more male than the general population, while Facebook was slightly more female (Mellon & Prosser, 2017, p.2).

Participation in this research was invited predominantly by e-mail or social media appeal. In the previous chapter it was revealed that Facebook was also the most frequently reoccurring platform mentioned by practitioners. It is not surprising then, that the age of respondents in this

research, was similar to the spread found in studies relating to social media use. It is particularly interesting to note the summary of the study by Mellon & Prosser (2017, pp.6-8) which concludes:

“On average, social media users pay more attention to politics. Despite paying more attention to politics, social media users vote less... This research also suggests that Twitter users are less representative along most demographic and political variables than Facebook users. Twitter studies are therefore particularly likely to have problems of representativeness if they are used without adjustment. However, with appropriate adjustments, samples of Facebook users could be a useful source of survey respondents.” (Mellon & Prosser, 2017, pp. 6-8)

Public Perceptions of Sexual Offenders

The study of public perceptions and attitudes towards sexual offenders is a popular topic for empirical inquiry (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.202). Criminological and social studies have previously indicated that attitudes towards sexual offenders could have profound implications for clinical and social decision-making (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.202). For instance, societal negativity about sexual offenders has been linked to difficulties in accessing stable housing arrangements and organized attempts to drive them out of communities (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.204). Yet it has been suggested that there is a lack of knowledge about the psychological concepts and processes that underpin these attitudes, which leads to attempts at influencing changes in attitudes towards sexual offenders using a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.204). Therefore, this research has aimed to understand public perceptions about sexual offenders. The strongest links in this research design, occur between public and practitioner perceptions of paedophile hunters. The link between the public perceptions of sexual offenders and public perceptions of paedophile hunters is weaker, and these results could have been omitted. However, the decision

was made to present them here, as they provide interesting insights regarding public perceptions of sexual offenders, nonetheless.

Table 5.2 People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g. voting and privacy)

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	36	8.5
2. Disagree	83	19.5
3. Probably Disagree	68	16.0
4. Probably Agree	81	19.0
5. Agree	75	17.6
6. Strongly Agree	82	19.2

At the societal level, public attitudes towards sexual offenders may have profound effects. Media outlets can inform and enhance public attitudes, leading to judgements being more punitive and in turn causing a cycle of hostility and negativity (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.211). This is related to several issues including legislation, punitive and restrictive policy and stigmatization of sexual offenders and is why the results of the public perception to sexual offender data is interesting (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.211). Table 5.2 outlines that 44% (187) of respondents disagree that people who commit sexual offences should lose their civil rights, and 56% (238) of respondents agree. There is a fairly equal divide between agreement and disagreement, and the lack of agreement on the issue which had been anticipated, was not found.

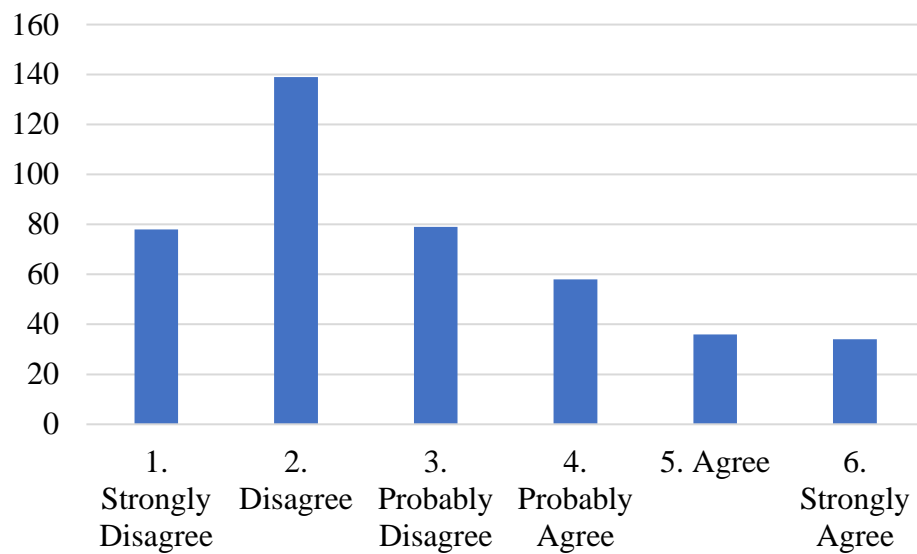
Figure 5.2 Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time

Figure 5.2 shows that 69.4% (296) of respondents disagree that trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time, compared with 30.1% (128) who agree. These results could be explained by studies that have found that people view sexual offenders as dangerous and that the rhetoric of policy makers has fuelled or matched this perception (Cochran, Toman, Shields. & Mears, 2020, p.75). Alternatively, Levenson et al. (2007) found that, compared to non-parents, parents in the U.S. were more likely to express fear when asked about sexual offenders, and reject rehabilitation.

Information pertaining to parental status of respondents was not collected in this research. This may be a useful addition in future research designs, particularly in linking parental status to attitudes of paedophile hunting groups too. However, this research has begun to explore the links between rehabilitating offenders and other aspects of respondent's background such as educational attainment and employment history. As such, the null hypothesis *there will be no difference between having worked in any capacity with people convicted of sexual*

offences, and agreement that only a few sex offenders are dangerous was developed and then tested. The null hypothesis was rejected. Instead, Table 5.3 below shows that the hypothesis correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(418) = -.173, p \leq .00$. The negative correlation seen here shows that as agreement with the statement *trying to rehabilitate sex offenders is a waste of time* increases, agreement with the statement *only a few sex offenders are dangerous*, decreases.

Table 5.3 Correlation Table 1

	Have you ever worked, in any capacity, with people convicted of sexual offences?	Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time
Have you ever worked, in any capacity, with people convicted of sexual offences?	1	-.172**	.224**
Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	-.173**	1	-.346**
Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	.244**	-.346**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Due to this result, the null hypothesis *there is no difference between having worked in any capacity with people convicted of sexual offences, and agreement that trying to rehabilitate sex offenders is a waste of time* was developed and then tested. The null hypothesis was rejected and the hypothesis correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(418) = -.224, p \leq .00$. This result indicates that there is a positive relationship between having work in any capacity with sexual offenders and agreement that trying to rehabilitate sex offenders is a waste of

time. I found this result interesting, as some research has found that higher socio-economic status (based on occupation) was associated with more favourable attitudes about sexual offender treatment and rehabilitation (Willis, Malinen & Johnston, 2013, p.235). Whilst few studies have considered the effect of educational level on public attitudes towards sexual offenders, those that have indicate there may be a link between educational attainment and less punitive responses (Willis, Malinen & Johnston, 2013, p.235).

Table 5.4 Correlation Table 2

	Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	What is your highest qualification?
Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	1	-.346**	.188**
Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	-.346**	1	-.338**
What is your highest qualification?	.188**	-.338**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5.4 therefore shows the results from the null hypothesis *there is no difference between higher level of qualification and agreement with the statement trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time*. The null hypothesis was rejected. Instead, the results show that this correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(416) = -.338$, $p \leq .00$. The negative correlation seen here shows that as *level of qualification* increases, agreement with the statement *trying to rehabilitate sex offenders is a waste of time*, decreases.

Table 5.5 People who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	68	16.0
2. Disagree	148	34.7
3. Probably Disagree	112	26.3
4. Probably Agree	69	16.2
5. Agree	20	4.7
6. Strongly Agree	7	1.6

Attitudes towards sexual offenders play an important role in the development of social practices around the treatment and management of sexual offenders, (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.212), which is why it was important to consider them in this research design. The existing literature suggests that attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders may be, at least in part, driven by the media and socially constructed stereotypes about the types of people that sexual offenders are (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.212). Table 5.5 above shows that 77% (328) of respondents disagreed and did not think people who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person. Whilst 22.5% (96) agree that people who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person.

Figure 5.3 below shows that 77% (328) of participants did not agree that sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people. Whilst 23% (98) of participants agreed that sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people

Figure 5.3 Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people

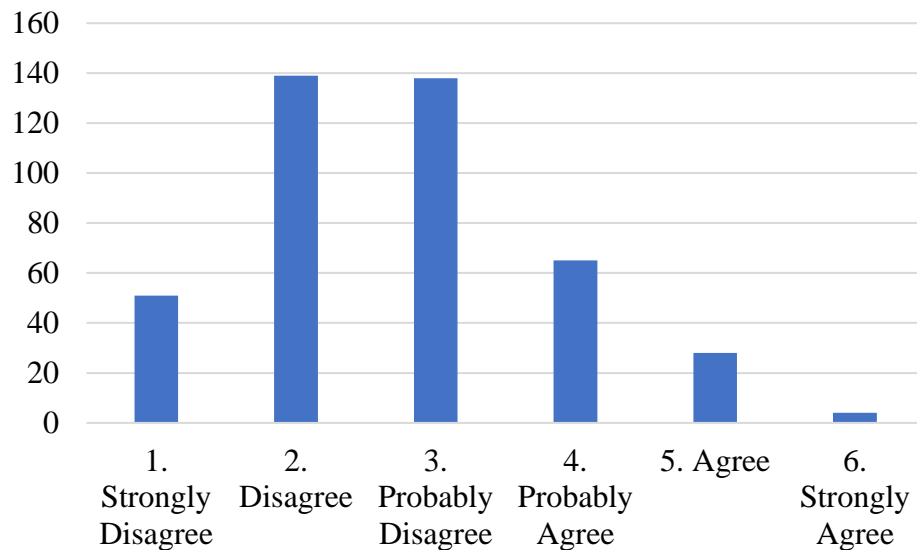


Table 5.6 outlines that 78.6% (335) of respondents to this question believing that sexual offenders *do* have close friends. Whilst 21.1% (90) respondents agree that most sex offenders do not have close friends. These results, along with those shown above in Figure 5.3 and Table 5.5, may help to provide greater insight into what the socially constructed stereotypes of sexual offenders are (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.212).

Table 5.6 Most sex offenders do not have close friends

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	66	15.5
2. Disagree	164	38.5
3. Probably Disagree	105	24.6
4. Probably Agree	63	14.8
5. Agree	20	4.7
6. Strongly Agree	7	1.6

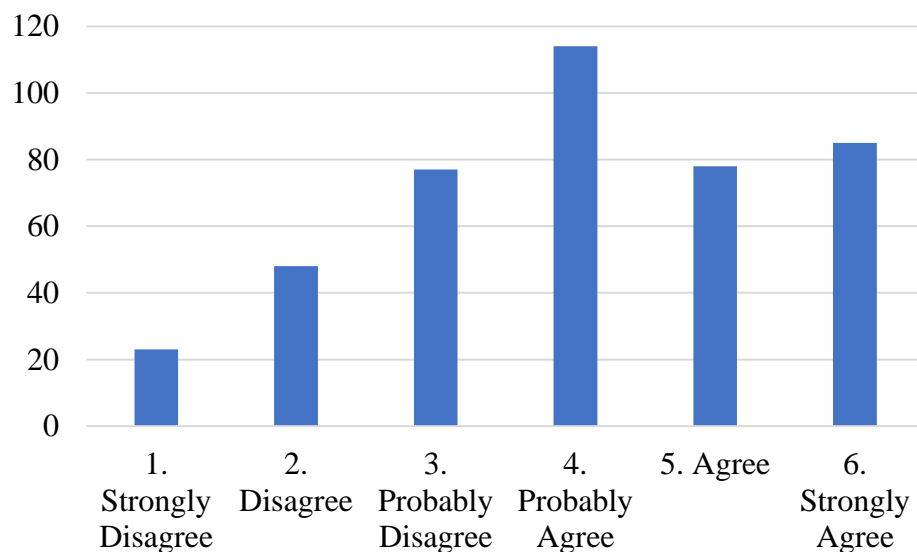
And this, in turn, may help to provide greater insight into public perceptions of paedophile hunters, which is explored in greater depth in the following section of this chapter.

Table 5.7 Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try hard

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	54	12.7
2. Disagree	171	40.1
3. Probably Disagree	117	27.5
4. Probably Agree	60	14.1
5. Agree	16	3.8
6. Strongly Agree	8	1.9

Perhaps it is not surprising then, that over 80% (342) do not believe sexual offenders have difficulty making friends. Olver and Barlow (2010) published the only study to examine attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders specifically in relation to personality factors (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.204). Although few differences emerged, the personality factor of ‘openness to experience’ (defined as having an active imagination and high levels of intellectual curiosity) was significantly associated with a more rehabilitative stance to sentencing sexual offenders (Harper, Hogue & Bartels, 2017, p.204). Whilst personality factors were not explored in this research, again these could be explored in future research in order to contribute to the understanding of socially constructed stereotypes of sexual offenders.

Figure 5.4 Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time



I found responses to *sex offenders should wear tracking devices* particularly interesting. As almost 70% of respondents had disagreed that *trying to rehabilitate sex offenders is a waste of time*, I had expected a much lower agreement rate to this question than was found. 65.1% (277) of respondent's agreed that *sex offenders should wear tracking devices*. Whilst only 34.8% (148) disagreed. The results show that the public opinion of tracking sexual offenders is at odds with the criminal justice system's calculated knowledge of risk, risk assessment and management (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238).

Table 5.8 The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	141	33.1
2. Disagree	164	38.5
3. Probably Disagree	75	17.6
4. Probably Agree	31	7.3
5. Agree	9	2.1
6. Strongly Agree	4	0.9

Some authors have suggested that the dispelling of social myths and stereotypes about sexual offenders plays a key role in reducing punitive preferences in relation to sexual offenders (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006). Almost 90% (380) of respondents expressed disagreement to some degree, that prison sentences for sexual offenders are too long when compared to others. This would indicate that there remains a strong preference for punitive action.

Table 5.9 Only a few sex offenders are dangerous

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	146	34.3
2. Disagree	137	32.2
3. Probably Disagree	60	14.1
4. Probably Agree	49	11.5
5. Agree	29	6.8
6. Strongly Agree	5	1.2

Preference for punitive action may be better understood when considering public perceptions of dangerousness. Table 5.9 shows that over 80% (343) of respondents disagree that only a

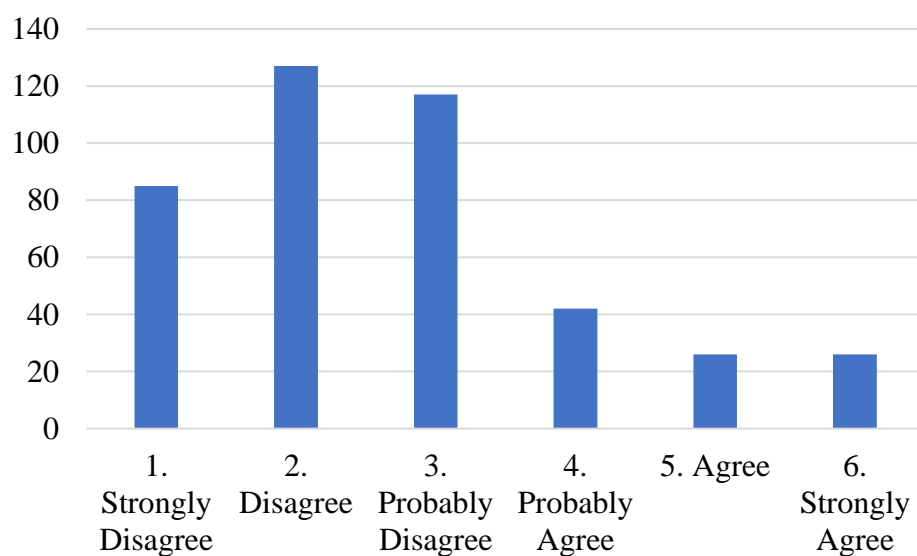
few sexual offenders are dangerous. Relatively small numbers (19.5%, 83) of the public agree that only a few sex offenders are dangerous, yet this seems at odds with their preference for punitive responses to sexual offenders, seen in Figures 5.2 and 5.4.

Table 5.10 Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	15	3.5
2. Disagree	102	23.9
3. Probably Disagree	173	40.6
4. Probably Agree	104	24.4
5. Agree	23	5.4
6. Strongly Agree	6	1.4

Table 5.10 above shows that 68% (290) disagree that sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity, whilst 31.2% (133) agree. It is interesting to note, as shown in Figure 5.5 below, that almost one quarter of respondents (22.1%) felt that sexual offenders should never be released from prison.

Figure 5.5 Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison



This is particularly interesting because at the heart of desistance research is an assumption that sexual offenders are people ‘like us’ and deserve the opportunity to live normal lives once they have been punished (Willis, Levenson & Ward, 2010, p.547). And yet, convicted sexual offenders are often deprived of such goods because of emotionally fuelled and uninformed public responses to news of those released. As we have seen, sexual offender registries, public notification, and residence restrictions are all examples of legislation designed to protect the public from convicted sexual offenders living in the community but what is the value of it, if this legislation is emotionally driven rather than empirically informed?

Table 5.11 Most sex offenders are unmarried men

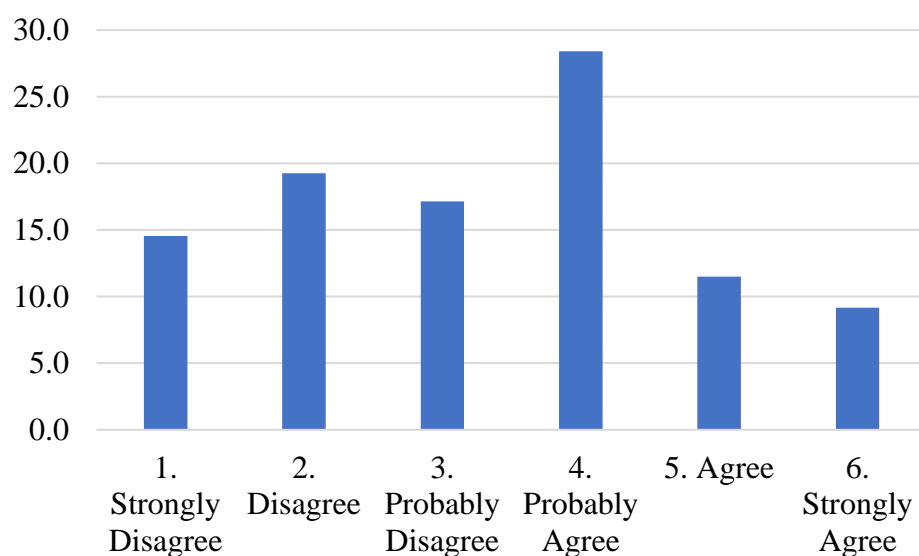
	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	101	23.7
2. Disagree	182	42.7
3. Probably Disagree	89	20.9
4. Probably Agree	42	9.9
5. Agree	9	2.1
6. Strongly Agree	2	0.5

Once again, the responses here indicate that the public do not perceive sexual offenders as being unmarried men. 87% (372) of respondents did not agree that most sex offenders are unmarried men. While 12.5% (53) of respondents agreed that most sex offenders are unmarried men.

Public Perceptions of Paedophile Hunters

Paedophile hunting is easily set off and has made plentiful mistakes (BBC, 2018). Understood as both a moral and a political phenomenon, it is an informal but potentially powerful mode of social control (Loveluck, 2019, p.24; Trottier, 2019, p.15). The explanations for engaging in paedophile hunting are varied and range from crime control to quests for justice (Loveluck, 2019, p.24). This is undoubtedly an area requiring further research, but we know that in cases of paedophile hunting, publication can in itself cause punitive consequences for the subject, by concentrating negative publicity before the complete facts are established (Loveluck, 2019, p.24; Trottier, 2019, p.15). This is compounded when situations are relayed by mainstream media. By attempting to document paedophile hunting activity, they are in fact widely responsible for expanding its audience and thus increase the shame and humiliation context (Loveluck, 2019, p.24). One of the fundamental aims of this research was to ascertain whether paedophile hunting activity is supported by the public.

Figure 5.6 Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service



In order to understand whether paedophile hunting activity supported by the public, the question of whether paedophile hunters are providing a worthwhile public service was posed. The data is entirely inconclusive, with an almost exact divide between disagreement, 50.9% (217) disagree, and agreement 49.1% (209) agree. This was surprising, my experiences as a practitioner had led me to believe that the public would overwhelmingly support paedophile hunting activity. This unexpected lack of support may suggest more of a rehabilitative standpoint than I would have predicted. I have been intrigued by the results of this particular question. The apparent rehabilitative standpoint of the public lead me to consider possible explanations, and I revisited the literature regarding punitive responses to convicted sexual offenders. In doing so, it again raised the question of whether people's educational attainment or professional background had any effect on the results I had found. As shown earlier, the null hypothesis was developed, *there is no difference in level of qualification and agreement with the statement only a few sex offenders are dangerous*. This was rejected, and the hypothesis correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(418) = -.188, p \leq .00$. However, as the relationship between educational attainment, dangerousness and rehabilitation was not strong, the question that followed was is there a relationship between those who support paedophile hunting activity, and their attitudes towards dangerousness and rehabilitation?

Table 5.12 Correlation Table 3

	Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	Only a few sex offenders are dangerous
Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	1	.497**	-.346**
Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	.497**	1	-.341**
Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	-.346**	-.341**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

To try and understand this, the null hypothesis *there will be no correlation between respondent's believing that trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time and paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service* was developed and tested. Table 5.12 shows this was rejected and there was a strong correlation, demonstrated significantly with Test Score, $r(422) = .497$, $p \leq .00$. This result demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between agreement with trying to rehabilitate sex offenders is a waste of time and agreement that paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service.

To try and achieve a different perspective, I tested the null hypothesis *there will be no correlation between respondent's believing that only a few sex offenders are dangerous and paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service*. This was also rejected and there was a strong correlation, demonstrated significantly with Test Score, $r(422) = -.341$, $p \leq .00$. The negative correlation seen here shows that as agreement with the statement paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service increases, agreement with only a few sex offenders are dangerous, decreases. The question is then, does having a positive relationship

between these two variables indicate a preference for punitive responses to sexual offenders and support of paedophile hunting activity? To try and understand this, the relationship between those that think paedophile hunting activity is a worthwhile public service, and agreement that the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court has been considered.

Table 5.13 The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	27	6.3
2. Disagree	33	7.7
3. Probably Disagree	65	15.3
4. Probably Agree	132	31.0
5. Agree	92	21.6
6. Strongly Agree	77	18.1

Half of the respondents (50.9%) questioned did not feel that paedophile hunters were providing a worthwhile public service. And yet, 71% (301) agreed that the evidence collected by them should be used in court. So, whilst participants may not value paedophile hunting activity as a worthwhile public service, the majority do support the use of their evidence in court. Understanding the relationship between these variables in greater detail is important, as it highlights the complexities of the issue. The null hypothesis that was therefore generated was *there is no difference in agreement with the statement paedophile hunting activity is a worthwhile public service, and agreement that the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court.*

Table 5.14 Correlation Table 4

	Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service
The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court	.740**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The null hypothesis was rejected, and this correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(424) = .740$, $p \leq .00$. Having seen such a strong relationship, I wanted to explore this further to consider the relationship between paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sex offenders, the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court and paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service.

Table 5.15 Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	51	12.0
2. Disagree	95	22.3
3. Probably Disagree	116	27.2
4. Probably Agree	94	22.1
5. Agree	42	9.9
6. Strongly Agree	26	6.1

In total, 61.5% (262) of participants disagree that paedophile hunters are doing a better job than police at catching sexual offenders. Meaning 38.5% (162) of respondents agree that paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sex offenders. I had

assumed that, if only half of respondents felt that paedophile hunters were providing a worthwhile public service, the responses to this question would have been more closely aligned. However, once again these results demonstrate how complex of an issue this is. Half of respondents (50.9%) feel that paedophile hunters are not a worthwhile public service. Yet almost three quarters (71%) feel their evidence should be used in court. And 38.5% of respondents think paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sexual offenders.

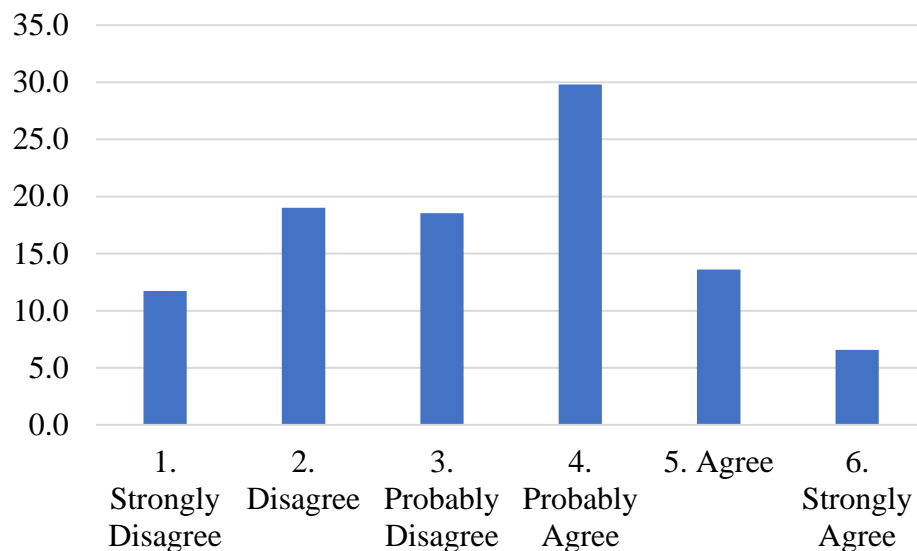
Table 5.16 The presence of Paedophile Hunters makes the internet a safer place

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	51	12.0
2. Disagree	104	24.4
3. Probably Disagree	101	23.7
4. Probably Agree	107	25.1
5. Agree	44	10.3
6. Strongly Agree	18	4.2

Table 5.16 shows that 60% (256) of respondents did not agree that the presence of paedophile hunters makes the internet a safer place. It occurred to me that the reason for this could be that respondents felt that paedophile hunter's themselves pose some risk. However, it could also be that they feel paedophile hunters do not reduce online risks. Purshouse (2020, p.392) provides an alternative explanation by suggesting that poor investigatory practices might unduly divert criminal justice resources from sexual offenders who pose a considerable risk to the public towards low-risk offenders. Perhaps then responses to this question can be understood by concluding that in their online investigations, the police tend to focus their

resources on dangerous offenders, whereas paedophile hunters focus on low-risk targets that may not have offended if not the activities of paedophile hunters (Purshouse, 2020, p.392).

Figure 5.7 Paedophile Hunters are a valuable form of community policing



I had expected that the results shown above in Figure 5.7 would align closely to the results from the question of whether paedophile hunters are providing a worthwhile public service. This question was another useful measure in assessing whether paedophile hunting activity is supported by the public. As was the case in the question of public service, there was a clear and even split as to whether people felt paedophile hunters are a valuable form of community policing with 50% (213) in agreement against 49.2% (210) in disagreement. This generated the null hypothesis *there is no difference between those who agree that the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court and those who believe that paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service*. The null hypothesis was rejected, and this correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(424) = .740, p \leq .00$. This result shows that there is a positive correlation between

agreement that evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court and that paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service.

Table 5.17 Correlation Table 5

	Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders	The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court	Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service
Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders	1	.666**	.718**
The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court	.666**	1	.740**
Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	.718**	.740**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Similarly, the null hypothesis was that *there is no difference between those who agree paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service and those who agree that paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sex offenders*. The null hypothesis was rejected, and this correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(424) = .718, p \leq .00$. It is not then surprising that the final null hypothesis *there is no difference between those who agree the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court and those who agree that paedophile hunters are doing*

a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders, was also rejected. This correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(422) = .666, p \leq .00$.

Table 5.18 The existence of Paedophile Hunters means sex offenders are less likely to reoffend due to fear of being caught

	Frequency	Percent
7. Strongly Disagree	75	17.6
8. Disagree	142	33.3
9. Probably Disagree	93	21.8
10. Probably Agree	77	18.1
11. Agree	30	7.0
12. Strongly Agree	8	1.9

Table 5.18 outlines that 72% (310) of respondents did not agree that paedophile hunters had an impact on reducing the likelihood of sexual offenders reoffending due to the fear of being caught. This is compared with 27% (115) in agreement. These results indicate clear disagreement from the public regarding sexual offenders reoffending due to the existence of paedophile hunters.

Table 5.19 The work of Paedophile Hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders

	Frequency	Percent
1. Strongly Disagree	65	15.3
2. Disagree	114	26.8
3. Probably Disagree	95	22.3
4. Probably Agree	108	25.4
5. Agree	30	7.0
6. Strongly Agree	14	3.3

Considering the lack of agreement seen in the previous responses, is not surprising that 64% (274) of respondents disagreed that the work of paedophile hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sexual offenders. It is also an interesting point to oppose the perception of there being large support for hunter groups. Perhaps this lack of support relates to the detrimental consequences that can arise, from the practice of disseminating footage of confrontations (Purshouse, 2020, p.405). As identified in the literature review, the consequences of sharing footage online can be devastating for the individual, and in some cases, those subject to such treatment have taken their own lives, as was the case when the Southampton-based TRAP group targeted David Baker in 2017. After which, the inquest concluded that social media activity following the circulation of video footage of the ‘sting’ was a causal factor that led to his suicide (Purshouse, 2020, p.405).

With a majority (64%) of respondents not believing the work of paedophile hunters reduces risk posed by sexual offenders, I wanted to try to understand the relationship between views on risk, community policing and perception of paedophile hunters doing a better job than the police. The results of this are shown below in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20 Correlation Table 7

	The work of Paedophile Hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders	Paedophile Hunters are a valuable form of community policing	Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders
The work of Paedophile Hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders	1	.684**	.579**
Paedophile Hunters are a valuable form of community policing	.684**	1	.759**
Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders	.579**	.759**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The null hypothesis *there is no difference between those who believe paedophile hunters are a valuable form of community policing and those who believe paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sex offenders*, was tested and rejected. This correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(419) = .759$, $p \leq .00$. Similarly, the null hypothesis *there is no difference between those who believe paedophile hunters are a valuable form of community policing and those who believe that the work of paedophile hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders*, was tested and rejected. This correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(421) = .579$, $p \leq .00$. And finally, the null hypothesis *there is no difference between those who believe paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sex offenders and those who believe that the work*

of paedophile hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders, was tested and also rejected. This correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(422) = .579$, $p \leq .00$.

Figure 5.8 There are no ethical issues connected to the work of Paedophile Hunters (e.g., breaching human rights)

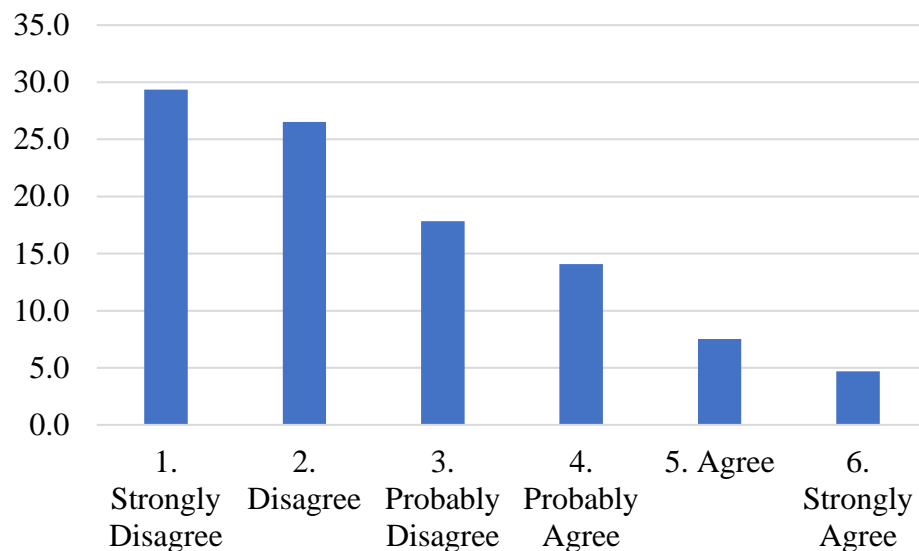


Figure 5.8 shows that 26% (112) of respondents agreed that there are no ethical issues connected to the work of paedophile hunters. Therefore, almost three quarters (73.6%) of respondents feel that there are ethical issues connected to the work of paedophile hunters. Paedophile hunting groups have been said to be controversial (Purshouse, 2020, p.406) and it is the case that some have attracted negative attention after engaging in vigilante tactics, inciting criminality, and smearing innocent people (Purshouse, 2020, p.406). This may help to explain why there is a lack of agreement when considering the value of paedophile hunting activity as a form of community policing or as a public service. However, these results lead me to consider, if there is a strong relationship between those that feel paedophile hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service, and agreement that the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used as evidence in court, does it also follow that a positive relationship will be observed in those who think there are no

ethical issues with the work of paedophile hunting and their views on wearing tracking devices?

Table 5.21 Correlation Table 8

	There are no ethical issues connected to the work of Paedophile Hunters (e.g., breaching human rights)
Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time	.471**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5.21 shows that the null hypothesis *there is no difference between those who think there are no ethical issues with the work of paedophile hunting and those who believe sex offenders should wear tracking devices* was rejected. This correlates significantly with Test Score, $r(423) = .471, p \leq .00$. This is yet another area where the complexities of paedophile hunting, and the public's attitudes towards it, can be seen. Paedophile hunters use social media to engage in policing activities but are not constrained by the same regulations as the police. So, if the aim is simply to inform the public of offenders in their community, then the uploading of video footage, particularly that showing targets in distress, arguably go too far in the eyes of the public (Purshouse, 2020, p.407).

Summary

This chapter has presented the results from quantitative data analysis. Themes identified as emerging from the academic literature in chapter 2 including public notification, risk management and the political nature of public were also examined, and interesting questions began to develop around public support for punitive and restrictive responses to sexual offenders. It was surprising that all the null hypotheses were rejected, this could not have been

anticipated prior to data analysis. Public perceptions regarding sexual offenders appeared more definitive and conclusive, than perceptions and attitudes toward paedophile hunting activity did. The exception to this was where respondents had higher levels of education. In these instances, support for paedophile hunting activity reduced as education levels increased.

To conclude, 426 people responded to an online survey which sought to establish the beginnings of understanding of public perceptions about paedophile hunting activity. Members of the public have been able to share insights from their own perspectives about sexual offenders and paedophile hunting activity. In one of the first attempts of its kind, this has yielded the beginnings of detailed information, which can (and should) be explored in much more depth. Suggestions on developing the research with recommendations for further study and analysis will follow in the next chapter, but the key findings from the quantitative research data are:

Public perceptions regarding sexual offenders seem to be aligned with those reported in the literature, in that they favour punitive and restrictive policies relating to convicted sexual offenders. Public perceptions regarding paedophile hunting activity is less conclusive than expected. There appears to be a fairly equal divide, and therefore real uncertainty, in the public's opinion regarding the value of paedophile hunting activity.

Educational attainment has a clear relationship with public perceptions regarding rehabilitation, but a weaker when it comes to perceptions of dangerousness. As such, this is an area within which there is scope for further research. The next chapter will discuss all of the research findings and synthesise them with the literature. It will draw links between the data

obtained as part of this research and that which is available in the literature and explore the implications for future practice.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

The aim of this research was to critically understand public perceptions regarding sexual offenders and paedophile hunting groups. And to critically understand practitioner's attitudes and opinions relating to the impact, moral and ethical validity of, paedophile hunting activity when managing convicted sexual offenders in the community. In order to achieve this, this research had four research objectives. Firstly, to critically explore the academic literature available regarding sexual offending, public protection and paedophile hunters. Secondly, to understand the themes emerging from the academic literature, to examine what the implications are for the criminal justice system and specifically police, probation and the courts. Thirdly, to undertake an online survey to generate an understanding of public perceptions regarding sexual offenders and paedophile hunters. And finally, to undertake interviews with police and probation practitioners, to understand their attitudes and opinions relating to the impact, moral and ethical validity of, paedophile hunting activity when managing convicted sexual offenders in the community.

By exploring attitudes and opinions towards paedophile hunting group activity, this thesis has provided a critical examination of paedophile hunting from both practitioners' and the public's viewpoints. It has also examined the theoretical underpinnings of paedophile hunting activity and places it within the theoretical framework of public notification, which has helped to contextualise and explain activity of this nature. To do so, material from the academic disciplines of law, sociology and criminology has been considered. The research design and methodology have both been informed by my own experience of working with sexual offenders both in the community and in custody.

This chapter will discuss the research findings and synthesise them with the literature within three key themes: public perceptions, professionalising paedophile hunters and risk reduction. It will make conclusions regarding attitudes and opinions emerging from the research and draw links between the data obtained as part of this original research and that which is available in the literature. It will explore implications for communities and for future practice and offer an insight into the complexities of working in the field of risk management and public protection.

Public Perceptions

Paedophile hunters have captured the imagination of the public, while causing the police a degree of concern (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). Although suggested definitions of the term paedophile hunter are now plentiful, it is more difficult to identify when the concept of the paedophile hunter entered the public consciousness in the UK (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013; Trottier, 2017, p.28). Paedophile hunters are not a form of mainstream entertainment, but they have adopted a significant presence on social media, aided by the swift growth of the internet (Willoughby, 2019, p.127). Not only do individual groups operate their own websites (see TRAP, Dark Justice and Justice4children) but they also come together to widely publicise what they do. The presentation of statistics and reports by paedophile hunters appear to both legitimise their activities and create an element of fear amongst the public, concerning the rates of offences taking place. Reports on paedophile hunting websites such as Dark Justice (Dark Justice, 2018) are like those measures and statistics published by police forces. But many of paedophile hunting group websites appear to be moving away from glamourising the acts, and instead presenting information in a measured way (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). However, footage of meetings between paedophile hunters and their targets are readily available on their websites, and widely accessible on social media. Thus, paedophile hunters are presenting their activities to the wider public without being subject to the questioning that often arises when

engaging with mainstream media (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). Whilst the public notification theoretical framework has shown evidence of the unhelpfulness of naming and shaming of this kind, there is an emphasis on the public's retributive preferences with it regard to sexual crime and this was supported by some of the results in this research (Pickett, Mancini & Mears, 2013, p.731).

The results of this research indicate that public perceptions regarding sexual offenders do not always align with those reported in the literature in that they often favour punitive and restrictive policies relating to sexual offenders. In this research, 65% of respondents in the public perception survey stated they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that sexual offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time. Whilst 22% stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that convicted sexual offenders should never be released from prison. Whilst the literature documents that punitive sexual offender laws are ineffective and possibly contribute to recidivism (Zevitz & Farakas, 2000, p.194), and that whilst some criminological efforts such as rehabilitation are meant to help, they may actually move offenders closer to criminality because of the label they assign to the individuals (Hamilton, 2017, p.15; Sjöström, 2017, pp.15-23). As such, public perceptions are at odds with the literature insomuch as whilst public perceptions of sexual offenders' favour punitive responses. And yet the uncertainty seen in the public perceptions data also signifies, for the first time, a continuum from vigilantism to activism. At one end of this continuum sit more traditional forms of vigilantism and at the other, increasingly non-violent and non-confrontational paedophile hunting groups.

Professionalising Paedophile Hunters

The literature provides evidence of the unhelpfulness of naming and shaming and public notification, but also that the public's appetite for punitive responses to sexual offenders could be the motivation for paedophile hunting groups. Therefore, in considering whether paedophile hunters would be professionalised, this research has identified the vigilantism to activism continuum. At one end of this continuum sit more traditional forms of vigilantism and increasingly non-violent and non-confrontational paedophile hunting groups more akin to activism, sit at the other. In order to establish this continuum, the research had to first conclude that paedophile hunting groups are not typically vigilantes.

From a socio-political standpoint, vigilantism has been viewed as typically violent expressions of a collective group seeking to assert or to restore order through direct punishment, in defiance of existing legal frameworks (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23). Criminologists have suggested that some vigilante action can remain within the boundaries of the law and does not always involve punishment. They have therefore tended to address vigilantism as a structured and forceful reaction to criminal or social or moral transgressions on the part of volunteer citizens, whose objective is to ensure the security of an established order (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.23). If we take this as an accepted definition of vigilantism and agree that paedophile hunting activity appears to be shifting away from instances of violence (and even in some cases, does not involve any meeting whatsoever), then the question shifts from being about whether paedophile hunting activity has actually moved away from vigilantism, to a more sophisticated and organised and legitimate form of seeking justice. This continuum, with more transitional forms vigilante justice at one end, and modern paedophile hunting activity on the other, may help to answer many of the questions surrounding paedophile

hunting groups. Not least, whether they can or will be professionalised, and whether as a consequence, police forces are likely to work collaboratively with them in the future.

The NPCC's typologies of the different groups of paedophile hunters currently operating in the UK appears to endorse collaboration up to an identified point on the aforementioned vigilantism to activism continuum. The four-point typology (outlined in full in preceding chapters) summarises type 1 law enforcement, as people and organisations who undertake policing with the appropriate training. Type 2 passive partners are organisations and individuals who gather information passively and do not undertake proactive activity. Type 3 E-Activists are OCAGs that engage in undercover tactics but who pass enforcement material to law enforcement prior to any contact. Finally, type 4 real world activists, are OCAGs that engage in real world contact with suspected perpetrators (NPCC, 2018). The NPCC's position on paedophile hunting groups (or OCAGs) is that their motivation should be questioned because there is no positive advantage to policing and such activism increases risk to potential victims, the suspect and to the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal justice processes (NPCC, 2018). This research has shown that the official police response to OCAG activity is inconsistent with practitioner's views. Senior police officers have outlined that work is being undertaken to provide operational guidance on issues such as seizure of digital media and disclosure in OCAG cases (BBC, 2019; NPCC, 2018). In November 2018, the NPCC released its strategic position statement in respect of OCAGs which documents:

“The complex, nuanced and often overlapping nature of activism and volunteering make it difficult to be prescriptive as to the approach to be taken. It is not legally practicable for policing to develop memoranda of understanding or protocols of operation with activists without risking claims of abuse of process. Where the state is seen to circumvent statutory regulation by sub-contracting work to public volunteers it is highly likely that criminal prosecution will be stayed.” (NPCC, 2018)

Within this document, as well as defining the four typologies of paedophile hunting groups, the NPCC also identify reasons that activity from type 4 groups (and sometimes type 3) can be unhelpful and these concerns mirrored much of what practitioners discussed in their interviews:

1. **Criminality:** some OCAG activity may mask underlying activist criminality and it is difficult to discern this without effort. This effort (vetting or monitoring) in itself, is a diversion of resource (see Police 8, 9 & 10).
2. **Lacking safeguards:** OCAG activity does not routinely consider wider safeguarding issues relating to further uncontrolled offending post challenge; offenders may become vulnerable to self-harm or secondary abuse and extortion (see Police 1, 2, 7 & 11).
3. **Loss of evidence:** OCAG activity risks loss of evidence where offenders are not effectively controlled post challenge and poor disclosure and controls may jeopardize prosecutions (see Police 2, 9 & 11).
4. **Untargeted:** OCAG's activity is not targeted so the total threat exceeds capacity. OCAG activity does not consider the severity of harm and may divert activity from higher priority towards unassessed threat (see Police 10).
5. **Inefficiency:** response to OCAG activity is inefficient as building prosecution cases from practice that is unregulated is less efficient than starting from a base of good operational practice (NPCC, 2018).

So, the official position is clear, the police are to 'adopt a position that, based upon current experience, the overall operational impact of OCAG's is not a positive one in the effort to tackle child abuse' (NPCC, 2018). But this is at odds with the practitioner's opinions collected in this research, some of whom talked about the benefits of paedophile hunting activity to their work (see Police 1 & Probation 14).

Evidence gathered by paedophile hunters led to 150 convictions in England and Wales during the 12 months to April 2018 (BBC, 2019; Gillespie, 2019, p.1015). In 2018, The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) documented that child abuse activism had continued unabated. Whilst law enforcement data was incomplete, they estimated that levels were in the region of 100 per month across the UK (NPCC, 2018). The report went on to document analysis of incidents of paedophile hunting activity. This revealed a mixed picture with some groups having amended their mode of operation. In doing so, some groups are now presenting packages of information and evidence to the police without having any real-world contact with the suspect (NPCC, 2018). Professionalisation of paedophile hunters was a theme echoed in this research. In recent years, media attention has been drawn to the activities of numerous paedophile hunting groups operating in the UK, with a particular interest in whether the activity will be supported by police. This has generated headlines such as 'Police 'may consider' working with paedophile hunters' (The Guardian, 2017). All but two police officers made reference to professionalising paedophile hunting groups, some appearing in support of it (see Police 1). Whilst others appeared to be more cautious and raised the interesting question of whether in professionalising these groups, the police would also have to make them accountable to the same laws and procedures as the professional practitioners currently undertaking the work (see Police 5). It was interesting to observe that fewer probation officers, only three in total, made reference to professionalising paedophile hunting groups. But when they did mention it, they were less ambiguous and were clear that the work being undertaken by paedophile hunting groups, should be left to the police. There was a feeling, both within the police interviews undertaken here, and within the literature, that there is an increased prevalence of criminality where purported paedophile hunters have no intention of notifying the police, but instead use the opportunity of pre-arranged encounters to blackmail or rob the suspect (see Police 8, 9 & 10; NPCC, 2018).

This evolution and professionalisation of groups may support the suggestion, emerging from the literature that paedophile hunting groups are attempting to fill a gap left by reducing police numbers (Hill & Wall, 2015; Haas, Keijser & Bruinsma, 2014, p.225; NPCC, 2018). The groups using a less sensational and more carefully designed approach to securing prosecutions could be evidence of this, but public support for paedophile hunting activity is not overwhelmingly present. In this research, 49% of respondents agreed that paedophile hunters are providing a worthwhile public service, while 50% did not. This is early evidence of support being aligned with a continuum, where traditional vigilante action is not supported, but more sophisticated acts of paedophile hunting activity, that do not involve violence or confrontation, may achieve greater support from the public. Even so, the relationship between the police and paedophile hunters is likely to remain complicated. The police may make public appeals for information that may trigger vigilante responses or may otherwise make use of data collected by paedophile hunting efforts (see Dark Justice ‘Our Statistics’). These developments are not the first instance of police and public cooperation, and the guidance from the NPCC appears to be an important step in an official line being drawn as to what extent the police are willing to collaborate with paedophile hunting groups.

Nevertheless, paedophile hunting activity continues to raise questions as to where the boundaries of citizen involvement in policing affairs might be drawn (Campbell, 2016, p.345). In recent years paedophile hunting has attracted significant media coverage (Campbell, 2016, p.345). Whilst this novel style of policing carries no legal authority, it is taking its place within a pluralised policing landscape, where its effectiveness at apprehending child sexual offenders is capturing public attention and perpetuated in mainstream media sources (BBC, 2018; BBC, 2019; BBC, 2020; Campbell, 2016, p.345). Citizen involvement in the provision of policing is often viewed positively as an effective way of relieving pressure on police resources while building stronger, more responsible and democratically engaged communities (Hadjimatheou

et al., 2019, p.1). Against a backdrop of dwindling police numbers, paedophile hunters often challenge democratic principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law. Even so, paedophile hunters and public instances of humiliation have continued to gain significant amounts of exposure, particularly on social media (See YouTube 2019; YouTube 2020). Despite a lack of formal accountability, this research has presented evidence that paedophile hunting activity continues to flourish and intensify (Campbell, 2016, p.345; Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Consequently, questions will continue to be asked about where the boundaries are formulated, and the emerging typologies defined by the NPCC are evidently initial attempts at prescribing this in some way (Berg & Shearing, 2018, p.72; NPCC, 2018).

Risk Reduction

The literature review identified several pertinent issues relating to paedophile hunting activity, including risk management, the impact of paedophile hunting on the criminal justice system and the issues surrounding public notification. The issue of risk reaffirmed the presence of a vigilantism to activism continuum because despite academic research on sexual offending and risk management being well established, it was clear that there remains some conflict between research and the public standpoint, particularly regarding risk, recidivism and rehabilitation (Hebenton & Thomas, 1996, p.428; McAlinden, 2016, pp.129-138). This was first demonstrated in this research by the themes coded and emerging from the qualitative data, closely matching the themes that emerged in the literature. Indicating that the literature closely mirrors attitudes of professionals and practitioners who have experience of working in some capacity with paedophile hunting activity. And second, by public perceptions regarding paedophile hunting activity being less conclusive than expected, highlighting the complexity

of the question of what impact paedophile hunting groups (and public notification) have on risk and recidivism.

Risk was a key area identified in the literature review, supported by the data collected in this research. For practitioners, risk carried a responsibility and they described needing to ensure that the methods utilised to assess risk were meaningful in the first instance. But they also explained that this could be jeopardised by paedophile hunting activity (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). The issue of how to manage this seemed complicated, owing to a conflict between wanting to prevent further victims, but also wanting to, in some cases, promote rehabilitation and reintegration of sexual offenders. Again, this was mirrored in the literature which documents information relating to individual change in assessments of risk, is especially relevant when considering the implication that a reduction (or escalation) in the level of assessed risk may have (Cording et al., 2019, p.230).

“They are paedophiles; they should get what's coming to them. And, I get that view, but as a police officer, clearly it's not helping.” (Police, 7)

This issue of risk (management) appeared to be closely linked with desistance, the concept of which relates to the process of abstaining from crime. Practitioners clearly linked effective risk management with desistance, but in the case of sexual offending, restrictive external controls such as imprisonment, residency restrictions, social isolation, and restricted employment opportunities are frequently imposed (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). This created an apparent conflict between risk and rehabilitation. Word frequency analysis using qualitative interview transcripts demonstrated that the top three most frequently used words by both police and probation officers were the same: people, paedophile

and police. Whilst this indicated some unity across professionals, the emphasis on rehabilitative and desistance-centred language such as *person* was more frequently observed in probation officer transcripts. With more punitive language, which is less consummate with desistance theory, such as *caught*, being used far more commonly by police officers. So, the question raised was, if there is a benefit to changing the risk rhetoric to be more inclusive of protective factors, what implications do the actions of paedophile hunting groups and public notification have in terms of risk and recidivism?

Public notification was another key area identified in the literature, and again it was echoed in the data collected in this research. It is particularly important to understand the relevance of labelling theory to contextualise this. There is a juxtaposition between the professional world, within which public notification and/or labelling are perceived to be detrimental to risk management, and the public's desire to know as much as possible about these individuals. The labelling is therefore about visibility, increasing the surveillance on the individual or allowing the public access to information about where individuals are located. Labelling theory outlines that internalized stigma occurs as a result of public shaming, and this is defined as the process whereby an individual validates negative stereotypes associated with a label as pertinent to their identity (Hamilton, 2017, p.15). The withdrawal from royal duties by Prince Andrew following allegations of abuse (BBC, 2019) and the Emmy Nominated *Leaving Neverland* documentary about the alleged abuse perpetrated by Michael Jackson, are all recent examples of public discussion concerning the threat of the alleged sexual offender. These discussions are related to everyday life and highly perpetuated by the media (McAlinden, 2016, p.129). In the academic literature, research continues to document the unhelpfulness and risk associated with public notification (Boone & van de Bunt, 2016, p.37) and debates about public safety, particularly around community notification, yield a discursive framework (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). This issue was reflected in this research by only 35% of

respondents disagreeing that sexual offenders should wear tracking devices and a surprising 65% of respondent's agreeing. The majority of respondents supporting the notion of sexual offenders wearing tracking devices supports the assertion that public opinion around closely monitoring sexual offenders is at odds with the criminal justice system's calculated knowledge of risk, risk assessment and management (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238).

Interestingly, public perceptions regarding paedophile hunting activity is less conclusive than expected, highlighting the complexity of the question of what impact paedophile hunting groups (and public notification) have on risk and recidivism. There appears to be a fairly equal divide, and therefore real uncertainty, as to the value of paedophile hunting activity. Public perceptions regarding paedophile hunting activity were less decisive than public perceptions regarding sexual offenders. In this research, 49% of respondents stated they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that paedophile hunters are providing a worthwhile public service; and 50% stated they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that paedophile hunters are a valuable form of community policing. This raised the question of whether there is a growing hunger for, and an increasing number of, paedophile hunter groups.

The suggestion within the literature is that paedophile hunting groups are attempting to fill a gap left by reducing police numbers (Hill & Wall, 2015; Haas, Keijser & Bruinsma, 2014, p.225; NPCC, 2018). In this research, 62% of respondents stated that they probably disagree, disagree or strongly disagree that paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sexual offenders. It is possible that respondents think there are fewer police, and an increased threat which produces a gap that is being filled by paedophile hunters. Whilst also believing that paedophile hunting groups do not do as good a job as the police. One doesn't necessarily follow the other, especially in an issue as complex as this one.

The impact of paedophile hunting activity on the wider criminal justice system is also a pertinent area, identified in this research.

“So the criminal justice system is being affected by their work and people are being brought to justice.” (Probation, 3)

Whilst this was most notably observed in police and probation practitioner’s responses, the literature demonstrates that the issue of paedophile hunting activity in the courts is also complicated. Despite concerns regarding paedophile hunters and the associated public humiliation, this form of citizen lead policing continues (Campbell, 2016, p.345; Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, p.90). The literature demonstrates that it has started to connect and align with existing networks of authorised and legitimate policing provision (Campbell, 2016, p.350). This has raised the question of whether such a development moves the police and public collaboration beyond a conventional one, of the members of public providing police with additional eyes and ears (Yar, 2013, p.490; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, p.90). Echoed in one of the most senior courts, the Court of Appeal concluded in 2018 that *‘the police have concerns that the zeal of some ‘vigilantes’ may lead them to seriously improper conduct. It would be much better for [paedophile hunters] immediately they have suspicions about the conduct of an identifiable individual to involve the police and leave them to investigate* (R v TL [2018] EWCA Crim 1821).

Whilst agents of the state may dislike or disagree with the activities of paedophile hunters (NPCC, 2018; R v TL [2018] EWCA Crim 1821), they clearly cannot ignore evidence passed to them (Sutherland v Her Majesty’s Advocate [2020] UKSC 32). Furthermore, in this research police and probation officers appeared to be more supportive of the activity of paedophile hunting groups than the official guidance would lead us to believe. Oftentimes, they conjectured about how the police and paedophile hunting groups could work together. To that

end, it is concluded that the criminal justice system reluctantly complies with the activities of paedophile hunters. The increased popularity of this citizen-initiated, cyber-policing has invited media commentary which does not always appear to warn against the implications of a move towards an antiquated form of justice in the same way that academic literature does (Campbell, 2016, p.350). Such a development moves collaboration well beyond conventional, and relatively harmless responsibility of the public providing the police with additional information. Many paedophile hunting groups have stated that there are local-level agreements and co-operation between themselves and the relevant police forces (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). Whilst this is difficult to verify without evidence, this research has shown that police officers are broadly supportive of the activities.

“My personal views are that if this is done properly, these groups will be a massive asset. My professional concern is that a lot of the time it’s not being done properly.”
(Police 1)

This extract taken from a police interview, demonstrates an argument supported by Williams (2007, pp.59-82) that such an approach, where recourses and responsibilities are shared, diffuses power across a diverse field of security and governance. At a practical level, there is a link whereby paedophile hunters will pass their evidence to the police, and the courts demonstrate in case law that such information will require investigation (*Sutherland v Her Majesty’s Advocate* [2020] UKSC 32). The fact that paedophile hunters supply the police with information means that there is, at the very least, an association between the activities of paedophile hunters and the police, even if no official relationship exists.

Where official relationships do exist between statutory agencies, legislation encouraging them to work together for crime prevention, community safety, risk management and public protection has emerged from various reviews. This legislation drives closer working

relationships that have both practical and conceptual consequences (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.87). However, ideologically, probation and police officers are regarded as occupying contrasting positions in the criminal justice system (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.90; Nash, 2008, p.312). With different philosophies, it was assumed that police and probation responses would be conflicting. Distinctive occupational cultures, based on contrasting views, were not discovered in this research (Mawby & Worrall, 2011, p.91; Nash, 2008, p.311). Early data analysis suggested that both police and probation officers discussed the same themes in similar proportions once coded. Further in-depth analysis showed that the perspectives and attitudes within those broad themes were indeed very different when comparing police with probation officers. The top three most frequently used words in both sets of transcripts were the same: people, paedophile and police. Indicative of unity across professionals, at least on some level, the emphasis on rehabilitative language such as *person* was more frequently observed in probation officer transcripts, with more punitive language such as *caught*, being far more commonly used by police officers.

Police officers in modern, post-enlightenment societies are an essential requirement for the maintenance of order. So, it is perhaps unsurprising that police officers in this research spoke least frequently about the attitudes of offenders (Paterson & Williams, 2019, p.14). If we accept that probation represents a profession with a profoundly moral purpose, then it is also surprising that, as with police officers, the largest proportion of information coded was into the *Risk Posed by Paedophile Hunting Activity* theme. Would we not expect for there to be less of a focus on risk, and more of a focus on rehabilitation? Although the ‘risk’ being referred to by police officers is different from the ‘risk’ being referred to by probation officers. Where police officers spoke often of *Risk Posed by Paedophile Hunting Activity* in terms of the risk to possible victims; probation officers spoke more often of *Risk Posed by Paedophile Hunting Activity* in

regard to the risk posed to the individual being targeted by paedophile hunting activity. Nonetheless, this research supports the assertion that there has been a loss of distinct roles, indicating a move towards the control of offenders based on their assessed risk, for the benefit of public protection. The breakdown of issues discussed and that make up the final themes (see Figure 4.1) are particularly interesting in this regard. It is clear that both for police and probation practitioners, and members of the public, the issue of risk posed by paedophile hunting activity is highly prominent.

Summary

It has been noted that definitions of the term paedophile hunter are now plentiful and paedophile hunters have captured the imagination of the public, while causing the police a degree of concern (Gillespie, 2019, p.1013). The results of this research show that public perceptions regarding sexual offenders are aligned to those reported in the literature in that they favour punitive and restrictive policies relating to this type of offending. The literature provides evidence of the unhelpfulness of naming and shaming, and yet the results of this research show that there is a preference in the public's retributive standpoint. This appetite for punitive responses to sexual offenders could be a motivation for paedophile hunters. In attempting to define and contextualise paedophile hunters, this research has considered whether these groups are vigilantes. If we consider, as some criminologists have, vigilantism as a structured and forceful reaction to criminal or social transgressions on the part of volunteer citizens, whose objective is to ensure the security of an established order (Johnston, 1996, p.221; Loveluck, 2019, p.25), then we agree that because paedophile hunting activity is shifting away from instances of violence and even in some cases, does not involve any meeting whatsoever, it has actually become a more sophisticated and organised form of seeking justice. A continuum from vigilantism to activism has been identified.

This research has also shown that the official police response to OCAG activity is inconsistent with practitioner's views. The official position is clear, the police are to 'adopt a position that, based upon current experience, the overall operational impact of OCAG's is not a positive one in the effort to tackle child abuse' (NPCC, 2018). But this research shows that this is at odds with practitioner's opinions regarding professionalising paedophile hunters.

The literature review identified risk as a key issue and that was supported by the data collected in this research. For practitioners, risk carried a responsibility and they described needing to ensure that the methods utilised to assess the risk were meaningful in the first instance but explained that they could be jeopardised by paedophile hunting activity regardless (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). For members of the public, risks associated with paedophile hunting activity, particularly regarding public notification, resulted in less support for paedophile hunting activity than was expected. There appears to be a fairly equal divide, and therefore real uncertainty, as to the value of paedophile hunting activity for both practitioners and members of the public. The following chapter will conclude, based on this original research, practitioner and public attitudes towards paedophile hunting groups and the implications for risk management.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

This thesis has been concerned with the actions of paedophile hunters. It has summarised existing knowledge regarding paedophile hunting activity, particularly focusing on definitions, motivations and development of these groups in modern times. It has provided an overview of theoretical explanations for undertaking paedophile hunting, and the conflicting dichotomies concerning the actions of paedophile hunting groups have been highlighted. There are three key themes that have emerged from this research which are summarised by way of conclusion here. These are understanding public perceptions, professionalising paedophile hunters, and risk reduction.

Understanding Public Perceptions

Understanding public perceptions generated a mixed picture of results and ultimately signified the start of the vigilantism to activism continuum. The research shows that public perceptions regarding sexual offenders are aligned to those reported in the literature, in that they favour punitive and restrictive policies. Despite the literature providing evidence of the unhelpfulness of naming and shaming, there was a preference in the public's retributive standpoint with regard to sexual offenders. In this research, 65% of respondents in the public perception survey stated they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that sexual offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time. Further, 22% of respondents stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that convicted sexual offenders should never be released from prison. Over half (56%) of respondents stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that people who commit sexual offences should lose their civil rights. And finally, 30% of respondents stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that trying to rehabilitate a sexual offender is a waste of time.

Public perceptions of sexual offenders seemed to be at odds with the literature inasmuch as public perceptions of sexual offenders' favour punitive responses, but the literature documents that punitive sexual offender laws are ineffective and possibly contribute to recidivism (Zevitz & Farakas, 2000, p.194). The appetite for punitive responses to sexual offenders is therefore suggested to be a key motivation for paedophile hunters. This, despite clear public support for paedophile hunting activity not having been found. In this research, 49% of respondents stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that paedophile hunters are providing a worthwhile public service. A clear majority of 71% stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that the evidence collected by paedophile hunters should be used in court. 26% of respondents stated that they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that there are no ethical issues connected with the work of paedophile hunters. With the minority of respondents (38%) stating they probably agree, agree or strongly agree that paedophile hunters are doing a better job than the police at catching sexual offenders. Therefore, it would seem that the public's standpoint remains firm, and punitive, where sexual offenders are concerned. However, they have clear concerns about paedophile hunting activity, suggesting they do not want the public protection or the risk management of sexual offenders to come at any cost.

Professionalising Paedophile Hunters

Professionalisation of paedophile hunters was a key theme emerging from this research for both practitioners and the public. In considering whether paedophile hunters would be professionalised, this research identified the vigilantism to activism continuum. At one end are traditional forms of vigilantism, within which increasingly definitions of paedophile hunting activity do not fit. Consequently, at the other end are increasingly non-violent and non-confrontational paedophile hunting groups. In order to establish this continuum, the research had to first conclude that paedophile hunting groups are not typically vigilantes. Evidence of

this can be seen where all but two police officers made reference to professionalising paedophile hunting groups, some in support of it.

“And you might get those people who have got real skills, you know, reason, sensibility, professionalism, who can bring that in and help us to do it because we would give that legitimacy and they’ll be, like, I’m willing to go and sit at home now and do a bit of this because I really give a shit about this because I’ve got kids and I want do something for my community. People want to be useful. They want to help, and this is something that everyone can get behind, everyone. And it would deter those offenders in our communities who just don’t have that message.” (Police, 1)

Others were more cautious and raised the interesting question of whether in professionalising these groups, the police would also have to make them accountable to the same laws and procedures as the professional practitioners currently undertaking the work.

“I’ve thought about it before, sadly, but I think if the police were to turn around and say we’re supportive of what you’re doing, please be a little bit more professional. I wonder whether they would fall subject to the same rules that we are in terms of RIPA and Investigation Power Act laws and whether the defence could argue that they’re working with the police/for the police and there’s just a complete breach of RIPA powers and they’re not adhering to the Regulation of Investigation Powers.” (Police, 5)

It was interesting to observe that fewer probation officers, only three in total, made reference to professionalising paedophile hunting groups. When they did mention it, they were less ambiguous. In fact, they were very clear that the work being undertaken by paedophile hunting groups, should be left to the police.

“No, I think you’ve got to have, if we’re saying hunter groups or trap groups or whatever, I just can’t see how...I think you’ve got to have professional people or it’s got to be a registered body in some form or another. I think there was the case, wasn’t there, with...who was that girl who was killed on the common?” (Probation, 13)

As such, this research has shown that the official police response to OCAG activity is inconsistent with police practitioner’s views. Senior police officers have outlined that work is being undertaken to provide operational guidance on issues such as seizure of digital media and disclosure in OCAG cases (NPCC, 2018; BBC, 2019). So, the official position is clear, the police are to ‘adopt a position that, based upon current experience, the overall operational

impact of OCAG's is not a positive one in the effort to tackle child abuse' (NPCC, 2018). However, this research has shown that this standpoint is not reflective of the opinions of police practitioner's working on the front line.

The issue of professionalising paedophile hunters was as complex for the public, half (51%) of whom did not feel that paedophile hunters were providing a worthwhile public service, yet the majority (71%) agreed that the evidence collected by them should be used in court. Considering the lack of agreement, is not surprising that 64% of respondents disagreed that the work of paedophile hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sexual offenders. It is likely that this lack of support relates to the detrimental consequences that can arise, from the practice of disseminating footage of confrontations, supported by 74% of respondents feeling that there are ethical issues connected to the work of paedophile hunters. Paedophile hunters use social media to engage in policing activities but are not constrained by the same regulations as the police. So, if the aim is simply to inform the public of offenders in their community, then the uploading of video footage, particularly that showing targets in distress, arguably go too far in the eyes of the public (Purshouse, 2020, p.407). Paedophile hunting groups have been said to be controversial and it is the case that some have attracted negative attention after engaging in vigilante tactics, inciting criminality, and smearing innocent people (Purshouse, 2020, p.406). This is likely to explain why there is a lack of agreement when considering the value of paedophile hunting activity as a form of community policing or as a public service, and real uncertainty as to the value of professionalisation among police, probation practitioners and members of the public.

Risk Reduction

Risk was a key area identified in the literature review, supported by the data collected in this research. Risk was an issue that transcended role and was again a prominent issue for both practitioners and the public. It reinforced the complexity of the vigilantism to activism continuum, along which the issue of risk runs parallel. For practitioners, risk carried a responsibility and they described needing to ensure that the methods utilised to assess risk were meaningful in the first instance. However, they also explained that this could easily be jeopardised by paedophile hunting activity (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238). The issue of how to manage this seemed complicated, owing to a conflict between wanting to prevent further victims, but also wanting to, in some cases, promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of sexual offenders. Once again, this issue was mirrored in the literature which outlined that including information regarding individual change into assessments of risk, is especially relevant when considering the implication that a reduction (or escalation) in risk may have for an individual (Cording et al., 2019, p.230).

Risk assessments impact greatly on an individual's progress through the criminal justice system and for assessors, this carries a responsibility. There is a need to ensure that the methods used to assess risk are meaningful in terms of being predictive of reductions in the risk of recidivism (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p.20; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.198; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001, pp.237-238).

“They are paedophiles; they should get what's coming to them. And, I get that view, but as a police officer, clearly it's not helping.” (Police, 7)

It could be for that reason that the focus on risk management within the criminal justice system was such a prominent topic for the practitioners I spoke to. The largest proportion of what was coded overall, was into the *risk posed by paedophile hunting activity* code, which makes up an

important part of this theme. As police officers in modern, post-enlightenment societies are an essential requirement for the maintenance of order, this is perhaps unsurprising (Paterson & Williams, 2019, p.14). Interestingly, police officers spoke least frequently about the attitudes of offenders. This could be an indication of a more victim centred approach, but the question raised was whether a victim is considered as the target of paedophile hunters, or the pseudo-victim by which we mean the victim that the person targeted thought they were communicating with.

Where police officers spoke of *risk posed by paedophile hunting activity* in terms of the risk to possible victims; probation officers spoke of *risk posed by paedophile hunting activity* in regard to the risk posed to the individual being targeted by paedophile hunting activity.

“We are really good at managing risk but we’re very risk averse and we’re very cautious and it seems that the emphasis of our work too often has been on safeguarding the offenders, who actually are adults in the community can look after themselves a lot of the time.” (Police, 1)

Paedophile hunters create a seemingly value neutral construction of public protection and prevention of dangerous offenders harming others. But this masks the serious implications for individual rights (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). It is true that the process of paedophile hunting is self-justificatory and difficult to challenge without appearing to side with a highly unpopular group of people (Jewkes, 2015, p.4; Yardley, Lynes, Wilson & Kelly, 2018, pp.81-83). Yet the risk management regulations associated with statutory public protection partnerships highlights an important issue regarding the lack of accountability and regulation of paedophile hunters.

This issue of risk was closely linked with desistance, the concept of which relates to the process of abstaining from crime. In the case of sexual offending, restrictive external circumstances

such as imprisonment, residency restrictions, social isolation, and restricted employment opportunities are frequently imposed (de Vries Robbé, et al., 2015, p. 17; Harris, Pedneault & Willis, 2019, p.197). Yet there was a clear paradox identified here. If a sexual offender who is being supervised is caught by paedophile hunters, it invariably creates issues around risk and risk management (see Police 7, 8, 9 & Probation 4, 7, 9). However, the paradox being that they are not desisting from offending because if prosecuted, they have been caught. Therefore, there is an argument to say that desistance is not working because these individuals are still offending, despite being managed. Word frequency analysis conducted using qualitative interview transcripts demonstrated that the top three most frequently used words by both police and probation officers were the same: people, paedophile, police. Whilst this indicated some unity across professionals, the emphasis on rehabilitative and desistance-centered language such as *person* was more frequently observed in probation officer transcripts. With more punitive language, which is less consummate with desistance theory, such as *caught*, being used far more commonly by police officers.

The issue of risk was as complex for members of the public. It caused conflict between their opinions relating to sexual offenders and to paedophile hunters. There are social justice contexts in which vigilantism is justifiable, but vigilantism can also result in serious human rights violations and concerns are therefore likely to persist as issues around resourcing for policing online continue to emerge. For the public, there is a requirement to determine between justified covert interactions with criminals and unjustified entrapment and herein lies, once again, the vigilantism to activism continuum. Prior to undertaking this research, it was expected that retributive and punitive public opinions regarding the treatment of sexual offenders would result in unified support for paedophile hunting activity. Indeed, the converse is true and almost

three quarters (73%) of respondents feel that there are ethical issues connected to the work of paedophile hunters.

If, as the literature has shown, there is a benefit to changing the risk rhetoric to be more inclusive of protective factors, and this research demonstrates that from both a practitioner and public standpoint, there is. Then the implications of action by paedophile hunting groups (and public notification) must be highlighted as being more detrimental than they are constructive. Whilst it is clear that neither the practitioners nor the public that participated in this research would want to appear to side with sexual offenders, they also clearly recognise that on balance, the problematic nature of paedophile hunting activity outweighs the capability it has to formalise itself as a legitimate public protection or risk management entity.

Final Comments and Recommendations

Whilst it is accepted that there have been limitations to the research design including my own position as an insider research, my position as a novice researcher and the impact this had on the length of the interviews, the limited geographical area covered by the research, and the issues with recruiting a representative sample for the online survey. There are also genuine strengths in that practitioners have been able to share insights in their own words and from their own perspectives and the qualitative interviews have been an excellent way to gather the beginnings of detailed information. Furthermore, 426 people responded to an online survey which sought to establish the beginnings of understanding of public perceptions about paedophile hunting activity, whilst also providing a measure of public perceptions of sexual offenders. Members of the public have been able to freely share their insights about sexual offenders and paedophile hunting activity. In one of the first attempts of its kind, this research has yielded the beginnings of detailed information, where access to both public and

professional opinions has been invaluable. What has been provided as a result, is an interesting and thought-provoking data set which has been subject to a level of analysis that is (hopefully) just the beginning. The subject area is vast, and there has been a large amount of data collected here. Further exploration of this data set, and indeed revised research designs looking for new data, is an exciting prospect that I would warmly encourage. The key findings from this research are as follows.

This research has identified the vigilantism to activism continuum. At one end of this are traditional forms of vigilantism, within which definitions of paedophile hunting activity increasingly does not fit. Consequently, at the other end of the continuum are progressively non-violent and non-confrontational paedophile hunting groups. In order to establish this continuum, the research had to first conclude that paedophile hunting groups are not typically vigilantes.

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data, closely matched the themes that emerged in the literature. Indicating that the literature closely mirrored the attitudes of professionals and practitioners who have experience of their work being impacted in some way, by paedophile hunting activity. However, analysis of the data showed that the perspectives and attitudes within those broad themes were very different when comparing the attitudes and opinions of police respondents, with those of probation respondents. The top three most frequently used words in both sets of transcripts were the same: people, paedophile and police. Indicative of unity across professionals on some level, the emphasis on rehabilitative language such as *person* was more frequently observed in probation officer transcripts, with more punitive language such as *caught*, being far more commonly used by police officers. In line with desistance theory, protective factors should underpin all work intended to reduce risk and

reoffending. The extent to which this is or is not happening is suggested as an area for further research.

Public perceptions regarding sexual offenders are aligned with those reported in the academic literature. They tend to favour punitive and restrictive policies relating to sexual offenders. Public perceptions regarding paedophile hunting activity is far less conclusive than expected, and there is real uncertainty as to the value of paedophile hunting activity. Factors such as educational attainment have a clear relationship with public perceptions regarding rehabilitation, but a weaker relationship with regard to perceptions of dangerousness. For the public, the issue of risk appeared to be complex and it caused conflict between their opinions relating to sexual offenders and to paedophile hunters. The implications of action by paedophile hunting groups (and public notification) have been highlighted as more detrimental than they are constructive and there is clear recognition that on balance, the problematic nature of paedophile hunting activity outweighs the capability it has to formalise itself as a legitimate public protection or risk management entity.

Police and probation officers are more supportive of the activity of paedophile hunting groups than the official guidance. Some conjectured about how the police and paedophile hunting groups could work together, although the possibilities of this were dismissed in the NPCC's OCAG procedural document. There is clear scope for additional research concerning the extent to which the NPCC's procedural document regarding responses to OCAG is representative of 'on the ground officers' perceptions. As such, and based on the analysis of the findings in this research, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Design and deliver information to enhance community engagement and public understanding of paedophile hunting groups. This should have a specific focus on the issues of regulation, capability and the risks associated with paedophile hunting activity. It should also provide explicit reference to the vigilante to activism continuum, to enhance public understanding of this complex phenomenon. It is suggested that this be achieved by publication of these research findings, with the addition of promotional work via main-stream media outlets, criminal justice and local authority websites, to maximise the accessibility of the information to members of the public.
2. Design and deliver training for police and probation practitioners to understand paedophile hunting groups and the vigilantism to activism continuum. This should have a specific focus on i) environmental competence to support practitioners in following their professional curiosity ii) utilising professional discretion balanced with their own morals, values, attitudes and opinions. It is suggested that this should take the shape of face-to-face training and should formulate a core part of the ongoing professional development of practitioners.
3. Assess to what extent the NPCCs procedural document regarding responses to OCAG represents attitudes and opinions of ‘on the ground’ officers. It is recommended that practitioner attitudes and opinions should be collected on a larger scale, and from a wider geographical area. This will help to address some of the discrepancies between the data presented here, and the guidance issued by the NPCC. In addition, I encourage the College of Policing and Probation Officer Training curriculums to reflect more accurately, the views and experiences of practitioners. This could be achieved by publishing these research findings in appropriate journals, engaging with practitioners in the consultation phase prior to policy being agreed, and also by encouraging ongoing practitioner engagement with relevant academic journals so that they can also help to

raise awareness of paedophile activity and its impact on professionals working on the frontline.

4. Ensure a Criminal Justice System wide criminological input that focuses on understanding paedophile hunting activity, the vigilantism to activism continuum, victims and the associated offending/offenders. Alongside this, a sound understanding at all management levels of the obstacles in addressing paedophile hunting activity when managing sexual offenders in the community is required. Again, this should take the form of ongoing training (see recommendation 1), but also multi-disciplinary peer support forums where experiences can be shared amongst practitioners.

As well as providing additional information to communities, these recommendations reflect the learning from the research and support the practitioners working with sexual offenders who, on an individual level, are also mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles themselves. This does not advocate that current policies and procedures should not be adhered to, as they are the current legislative structure through which criminal justice work has to be conducted. However, what is required is an understanding of the uniqueness and complexities of the work that these professionals are undertaking, balanced with their own human experiences, morals and values. Whilst this falls outside of blanket policy, deeper insight into practitioners' views and opinions, translated and reflected into the wider policy would be warmly welcomed.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Section 1: Rapport Building

1. General check in, thank you for time
2. Could you tell me how long you have been in your current role?
3. Could you tell me how you came to be in the job you are currently doing?

Section 2: Paedophile Hunters

1. What do you understand by the term paedophile hunter?
2. Are you aware of online paedophile hunting groups?
3. Can you talk to me about any experience you have of paedophile hunting groups with regard to managing your offenders?
4. What are your views on paedophile hunting groups? And do you think there is a difference in your personal and professional opinions with regard to paedophile hunting groups?
5. In your opinion, do the activities of paedophile hunting groups impact either positively or negatively, on your ability to manage risk?
6. In your view, do you think paedophile hunting groups help or hinder Offender Management?
7. Which platforms (i.e. particular website or social media outlets) have you seen this activity on, if any?

Section 3: Case Examples

1. Are you able to tell me about a case that you have been involved with, that has had Paedophile Hunting activity involved in some way?
2. Do you feel adequately equipped in your profession, to respond when cases involving Paedophile Hunting activity arise?
3. What, in your view, is the biggest danger posed by Paedophile Hunting activity in regard to the impact it has on your ability to manage cases?

Section 4: Summary

1. Is there anything further you wish to add?
2. Thanks and close.

Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire

1. People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g. voting and privacy).
2. People who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person.
3. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.
4. Most sex offenders do not have close friends.
5. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try hard.
6. Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time.
7. Only a few sex offenders are dangerous.
8. Most sex offenders are unmarried men.
9. The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes.
10. Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity.
11. Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time.
12. Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison.
13. The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court.
14. Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders.
15. Paedophile Hunters are a valuable form of community policing
16. Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service.
17. The presence of Paedophile Hunters makes the internet a safer place.
18. The existence of Paedophile Hunters means sex offenders are less likely to reoffend due to fear of being caught.
19. The work of Paedophile Hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders.
20. There are no ethical issues connected to the work of Paedophile Hunters (e.g. breaching human rights)

Appendix 3 – Thematic Networks, from Codes to Themes

From Codes to Themes		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Themes Identified
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of victimless crime • Position as a victim 	Attitudes of offenders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody likes sex offenders • Groups of concerned citizens • Engaging, influencing and training groups • Distinction between catching those who are not convicted, and ‘outing’ those who are • Safeguarding 	Police attitudes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeopardise rehabilitation • Concern about the presence of social media • Well intended, but no substitute for policing • Varying degrees of professionalism • Concerns regarding paedophile hunters’ motivations 	Probation Officer attitudes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence • Investigations • Qualified 	Professional experience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about sexual offenders • Desire to aid police • Supportive of paedophile hunting activity 	Public perceptions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unregulated • Civilians • Online • Vigilante 	Defining ‘paedophile hunter’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working class • Council estates • Low intellect 	Economic status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying motivations • Glory • Pride • Victim turned paedophile hunter • Civil duty / safeguarding children • Opportunist 	Hunter motivation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted by police • No evidence suggesting it acts as a deterrent 	Paedophile hunting as a deterrent

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regurgitated videos • Increasing prevalence over last 5 years • Waves of public and media interest • Not a new phenomenon but increased presence online 	Prevalence of paedophile hunting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Local news • Dating websites & apps • YouTube 	Social media
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRAP • Stiston Hunter • Guardians of the North • Skid • Shane Brannigan 	Specific groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various direct quotes 	Quotes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death and/or injury • Unprofessionalism • People being wrongly identified • Retribution 	Risks posed by paedophile hunting activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second line of defence • Mental health issues / Low IQ • Safeguarding • Position as offender and victim 	Managing offenders caught by paedophile hunting groups

Basic – Organising – Global Themes		
Themes as Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of victimless crime • Position as a victim 	Attitudes of offenders	Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody likes sex offenders • Groups of concerned citizens • Engaging, influencing and training groups • Distinction between catching those who are not convicted, and ‘outing’ those who are • Safeguarding 	Police attitudes	Safeguarding and Risk Emergence and Prevalence Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeopardise rehabilitation • Concern about the presence of social media 	Probation Officer attitudes	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well intended, but no substitute for policing • Varying degrees of professionalism • Concerns regarding paedophile hunters' motivations 		Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence • Investigations • Qualified 	Professional experience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about sexual offenders • Desire to aid police • Supportive of paedophile hunting activity 	Public perceptions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unregulated • Civilians • Online • Vigilante 	Defining 'paedophile hunter'	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working class • Council estates • Low intellect 	Economic status	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying motivations • Glory • Pride • Victim turned paedophile hunter • Civil duty / safeguarding children • Opportunist 	Hunter motivation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted by police • No evidence suggesting it acts as a deterrent 	Paedophile hunting as a deterrent	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regurgitated videos • Increasing prevalence over last 5 years • High levels of media interest • Waves of public and media interest • Not a new phenomenon but increased presence online 	Prevalence of paedophile hunting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Local news • Dating websites & apps • YouTube 	Social media	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRAP • Stiston Hunter • Guardians of the North • Skid • Shane Brannigan 	Specific groups	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various direct quotes 	Quotes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death and/or injury • Unprofessionalism • People being wrongly identified • Retribution 	Risks posed by paedophile hunting activity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second line of defence • Mental health issues / Low IQ • Safeguarding • Position as offender and victim 	Managing offenders caught by paedophile hunting groups	

Appendix 4 – Appearance in Coding

	<i>Police Interview Number</i>													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Initial Codes	Appearances in Coding													
Attitudes of Offenders	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	1
Police Attitudes to PH	15	13	7	9	3	4	6	6	9	15	9	13	17	9
Professional Experience	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	4	3	4	2	2
Public Perceptions	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Defining 'Paedophile Hunter'	0	2	1	1	2	1	2	4	2	0	0	0	6	1
Economic Status	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Hunter Motivation	7	0	1	5	1	1	6	4	2	6	4	4	12	3
PH activity as a deterrent	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
Prevalence of PH	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	4	1	2	9	6	5
Professional Experience	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	4	3	4	2	2
Public Perceptions	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Social Media	4	4	3	2	3	3	6	1	0	5	1	5	5	3
Specific Groups	10	9	2	5	1	3	5	7	2	5	1	2	2	5
Quotes	7	2	2	2	0	0	2	4	3	4	2	2	8	0
Risks Posed by PH Activity	2	4	7	3	1	1	7	8	4	6	5	4	11	7
Managing Offenders Caught by PH	0	7	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	2	4	2	0	5
Outing Sex Offenders	2	1	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	3	1	0	2
Safeguarding Children	5	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	3	3	0
Safeguarding Offenders	3	2	0	4	1	1	6	0	1	3	6	4	6	4
Training	3	1	0	0	1	1	2	4	0	0	0	2	3	1
Community Policing	22	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Other Agencies	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Political References	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professionalising PHs	3	0	2	1	4	1	2	0	2	2	4	7	1	2
Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senior Management	6	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	1	3	1	0	1

	<i>Probation Officer Interview Number</i>													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Initial Codes	Appearance in Codes													
Attitudes of Offenders	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Probation Officer Attitudes	9	4	5	14	4	7	0	8	9	7	12	15	3	6
Professional Experience	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Public Perceptions	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Defining 'Paedophile Hunter'	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	2	2	3	1	1
Economic Status	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hunter Motivation	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	2
PH Activity as a Deterrent	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Prevalence of PH	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Social Media	4	0	0	3	0	2	0	2	2	4	4	6	0	1
Specific Groups	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Quotes	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	1

Risks Posed by PH Activity	9	3	2	3	2	5	0	3	3	5	5	7	4	2
Managing Offenders Caught by PH	2	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	3	5	4	9	6	4
Outing Sex Offenders	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0
Safeguarding Children	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Safeguarding Offenders	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	1	4	6	0	2
Training	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	3	2	0	1
Community Policing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Agencies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Professionalising PHs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Resources	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	0

Appendix 5 – Code Book

Attitudes of Offenders	Any reference to the attitudes of the offenders caught by PH groups	8	13
Police Attitudes to PH	To paedophile hunters	14	135
Probation Officer Attitudes	All references by Probation Officers of their attitudes and views of PH activity.	14	106
Professional Experience	A node to explain the amount and type of professional experience of the participant being interviewed.	28	53
Public Perceptions	All references by police officers to the public perceptions of sexual offenders and Paedophile Hunters (groups / activities etc.)	6	11
Defining 'Paedophile Hunter'	Any attempts to explicitly define PH by police officers	24	41
Economic Status	Any reference to economic status or background made by police officers.	3	6
Hunter Motivation	A node that explores the police perceptions of the motivations behind the groups hunting paedophiles online.	17	66
Paedophile Hunting Activity As A Deterrent	Any reference to PH activity acting as a deterrent (or not) for online sexual offenders.	7	13
Police Attitudes to PH	To paedophile hunters	14	135
Prevalence of PH	Any mention of the prevalence (increasing or decreasing) of PH	15	40
Probation Officer Attitudes	All references by Probation Officers of their attitudes and views of PH activity.	14	106
Professional Experience	A node to explain the amount and type of professional experience of the participant being interviewed.	28	53
Public Perceptions	All references by police officers to the public perceptions of sexual offenders and Paedophile Hunters (groups / activities etc.)	6	11
Social Media	Mention of social media either broadly regarding sexual offending or specifically in relation to PH groups	23	76
Specific Groups	Any mention of specific paedophile hunting groups / individuals made by police officers.	19	64
Quotes	Direct and interesting quotes taken from police officer interviews.	18	49
Risks Posed by PH Activity	Any reference to the risks or danger involved in PH activity	28	127

Managing Offenders Caught by PH	Any reference to managing offenders convicted following PH activity, or already convicted and then outed by PH activity	20	68
Outing Sex Offenders	Any reference to sexual offenders being 'outed' made by police officers.	14	24
Police Attitudes to PH	To paedophile hunters	14	135
Probation Officer Attitudes	All references by Probation Officers of their attitudes and views of PH activity.	14	106
Professional Experience	A node to explain the amount and type of professional experience of the participant being interviewed.	28	53
Public Perceptions	All references by police officers to the public perceptions of sexual offenders and Paedophile Hunters (groups / activities etc.)	6	11
Safeguarding Children	Any reference to safeguarding children	10	20
Safeguarding Offenders	Any reference to safeguarding offenders	21	61
Training	Any reference to training	20	35
Community Policing	All references to community-based policing in here.	6	27
Other Agencies	Reference to other professional bodies or policing / investigative agencies	10	14
Police Attitudes to PH	To paedophile hunters	14	135
Political References	Any reference to the politics of managing sexual offenders	1	2
Probation Officer Attitudes	All references by Probation Officers of their attitudes and views of PH activity.	14	106
Professional Experience	A node to explain the amount and type of professional experience of the participant being interviewed.	28	53
Professionalising Paedophile Hunters	Any reference made to training / equipping PH groups	15	34
Public Perceptions	All references by police officers to the public perceptions of sexual offenders and Paedophile Hunters (groups / activities etc.)	6	11
Resources	Any mention or reference to resources	7	10
Senior Management	Any reference made to senior management by police officers	8	17

Appendix 6 – Correlation Tables in Full

Table 5.1.6 Correlation Table 1

		Have you ever worked, in any capacity, with people convicted of sexual offences?	Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time
Have you ever worked, in any capacity, with people convicted of sexual offences?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.173**	.224**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	420	420	418
Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Pearson Correlation	-.173**	1	-.346**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	420	426	424
Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	Pearson Correlation	.224**	-.346**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	418	424	424

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.1.7 Correlation Table 2

		Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	What is your highest qualification?
Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Pearson Correlation	1	-.346**	.188**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	426	424	420
	Pearson Correlation	-.346**	1	-.338**

Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	424	424	418
What is your highest qualification?	Pearson Correlation	.188**	-.338**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	420	418	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.1.8 Correlation Table 3

		Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	Only a few sex offenders are dangerous
Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	Pearson Correlation	1	.497**	-.346**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	424	424	424
Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	Pearson Correlation	.497**	1	-.341**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	424	426	426
Only a few sex offenders are dangerous	Pearson Correlation	-.346**	-.341**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	424	426	426

Table 5.1.9 Correlation Table 4

		Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court
Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	Pearson Correlation	1	.740**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	426	426
The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court	Pearson Correlation	.740**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	426	426

Table 5.2.1 Correlation Table 5

		Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders	The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as evidence to convict people in court	Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service
Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders	Pearson Correlation	1	.666**	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	424	424	424
The evidence collected by Paedophile Hunters should be used as	Pearson Correlation	.666**	1	.740**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000

evidence to convict people in court	N	424	426	426
Paedophile Hunters are delivering a worthwhile public service	Pearson Correlation	.718**	.740**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	424	426	426

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.2.2 Correlation Table 6

		There are no ethical issues connected to the work of Paedophile Hunters (e.g. breaching human rights)	Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time
There are no ethical issues connected to the work of Paedophile Hunters (e.g. breaching human rights)	Pearson Correlation	1	.471**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	426	425
Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time	Pearson Correlation	.471**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	425	425

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.2.3 Correlation Table 7

		The work of Paedophile Hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders	Paedophile Hunters are a valuable form of community policing	Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders
The work of Paedophile Hunters helps to reduce the risk posed by sex offenders	Pearson Correlation	1	.684**	.579**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	426	423	424
Paedophile Hunters are a valuable form of community policing	Pearson Correlation	.684**	1	.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	423	423	421
Paedophile Hunters are doing a better job than the Police at catching sex offenders	Pearson Correlation	.579**	.759**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	424	421	424

Appendix 7 – Favourable Ethical Approval & URP-16 Form

Professor Matthew Wait,
BA (Hons) MA MPhil DPhil FAcSS Professor of Law and Society
Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

T +44 (0)23 9284 6012
E matthew.wait@port.ac.uk

FAVOURABLE ETHICAL OPINION (with conditions) Name: Laura Frampton

Study Title: The Hunters vs The Hunted: An Examination of the Emergence of Online Naming and Shaming Campaigns.

Reference Number: FHSS 2018-090

Date: 18/12/2018

Thank you for submitting your application to the FHSS Ethics Committee.

I am pleased to inform you that FHSS Ethics Committee was content to grant a favourable ethical opinion of the above research on the basis described in the submitted documents listed at Annex A, and subject to standard general conditions (See Annex B).

With this there are a number of ethical conditions to comply with, and some additional advisory notes you may wish to consider, all shown below.

Condition(s)¹

1. Interview participants. 8.2. are encouraged not to give details of cases or identifying data. But what if they do? In the PIS it says it will not be anonymised but why not? Can't it be redacted? This could be addressed.
2. Gatekeepers: 11.1 "I will gather this participant population by approaching the relevant senior officers for each of the offender management teams and asking them to provide details of officers who may be willing to participate". I presume the 'relevant senior offices' are the gatekeepers spoken about in 8.2. The exact role of these gatekeepers is a little unclear. I presume the gatekeepers will send out the PIS to potential interviewees..
3. Survey participants: 11.1. "The participant population pool will be a snowball sample in that I will initially post the link to the survey using social media and e-mail approaching those I already have contact with.". How were these contacts come by and do you have permission to contact the people regarding your research?
4. Survey participants: 11.1 are all adults with internet access. This seems a little too large and could lead to distorted results if e.g. the survey is filled in outside of the UK. Perhaps consider limiting this to UK residents?
5. PIS: it should be stated that the interview will be transcribed. Potential participants also need to be provided with the withdrawal deadline.
6. Consent forms for interviews: boxes for audio-recording and verbatim citation are needed.
7. In Section 1 - Introduction to the Survey, you need to replace the ICJS Ethics Committee chair on vasileios.karagiannopoulos@port.ac.uk with the FHSS Ethics Committee Chair at richard.hitchcock@port.ac.uk

¹ A favourable opinion will be dependent upon the study adhering to the conditions stated, which are based on the application document(s) submitted. It is appreciated that Principal Investigators may wish to challenge conditions or propose amendments to these in the resubmission to this ethical review.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Park Building
King Henry I Street

Portsmouth PO1 2DZ

T: +44 (0)23 9284 8484 port.ac.uk/fhss

Advisory Note(s)²

1. 8.2. There is a typing error in the sentence “In addition to this, the role of a gatekeeper can be considered to invite participants indecently of the researcher.”

The word ‘indecently’ should be replaced by ‘independently’.
2. 8.2. NPS is not explained on first use; please explain all acronyms and abbreviations on first use.
3. The new University logo needs to be used on the PIS and consent form.
4. In the PIS, Andy Williams’ email address is spelt wrong. Provide contact details for the FHSS EC.
5. You need to look at the numbering in Section 2 – Consent Questions

Please note that the favourable opinion of FHSS Ethics Committee does not grant permission or approval to undertake the research/ work. Management permission or approval must be obtained from any host organisation, including the University of Portsmouth or supervisor, prior to the start of the study.

Wishing you every success in your research

Chair

Mr Richard Hitchcock
Email: ethics-fhss@port.ac.uk

Annexes
A - Documents reviewed B - After ethical review

ANNEX A - Documents reviewed

The documents ethically reviewed for this application

Application Form 1 Participant Information Sheet 1 Consent Form 1 Supervisor Email
Confirming Application 1 Evidence From External Organisation Showing Support 1

03/12/2018 04/12/2018 04/12/2018 04/12/2018 04/12/2018



² The comments are given in good faith and it is hoped they are accepted as such. The PI does not need to adhere to these, or respond to them, unless they wish to.

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Survey Instrument 1 04/12/2018 Interview Questions/Topic List 1 04/12/2018

ANNEX B - After ethical review

1. This Annex sets out important guidance for those with a favourable opinion from a University of Portsmouth Ethics Committee. Please read the guidance carefully. A failure to follow the guidance could lead to the committee reviewing and possibly revoking its opinion on the research.
2. It is assumed that the work will commence within 1 year of the date of the favourable ethical opinion or the start date stated in the application, whichever is the latest.
3. The work must not commence until the researcher has obtained any necessary management permissions or approvals – this is particularly pertinent in cases of research hosted by external organisations. The appropriate head of department should be aware of a member of staff's plans.
4. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study beyond that stated in the application, the Ethics Committee must be informed.
5. Any proposed substantial amendments must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review. A substantial amendment is any amendment to the terms of the application for ethical review, or to the protocol or other supporting documentation approved by the Committee that is likely to affect to a significant degree:
 - (a) the safety or physical or mental integrity of participants
 - (b) the scientific value of the study
 - (c) the conduct or management of the study.
- 5.1 A substantial amendment should not be implemented until a favourable ethical opinion has been given by the Committee.
6. At the end of the work a final report should be submitted to the ethics committee. A template for this can be found on the University Ethics webpage.
7. Researchers are reminded of the University's commitments as stated in the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) viz:
 - maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
 - ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and

professional frameworks, obligations and standards

- • supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers
- • using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
- • working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

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8. In ensuring that it meets these commitments the University has adopted the [UKRIO Code of Practice for Research](#). Any breach of this code may be considered as misconduct and may be investigated following the University [Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#). Researchers are advised to use the [UKRIO checklist](#) as a simple guide to integrity.

FORM UPR16

Research Ethics Review Checklist

Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information

Student ID: 834571

PGRS Name: Laura Frampton

Department: ICJS

First Supervisor: Dr Andy Williams

Start Date: October 2016

Study Mode and Route: Part-time, Professional Doctorate

Title of Thesis: The Hunters and The Hunted. Exploring Practitioner and Public Attitudes Towards Paedophile Hunting Groups and the Implications for Risk Management.

Thesis Word Count: (excluding ancillary data) 49,337

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist: (If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: <http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/>)

- a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame? **YES**
- b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged? **YES**
- c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship? **YES**
- d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration? **YES**
- e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements? **YES**

Candidate Statement:

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):
FHSS 2018-090

Signed (PGRS): *Laura Frampton*

Date: 25/09/2020

UPR16 – April 2018

